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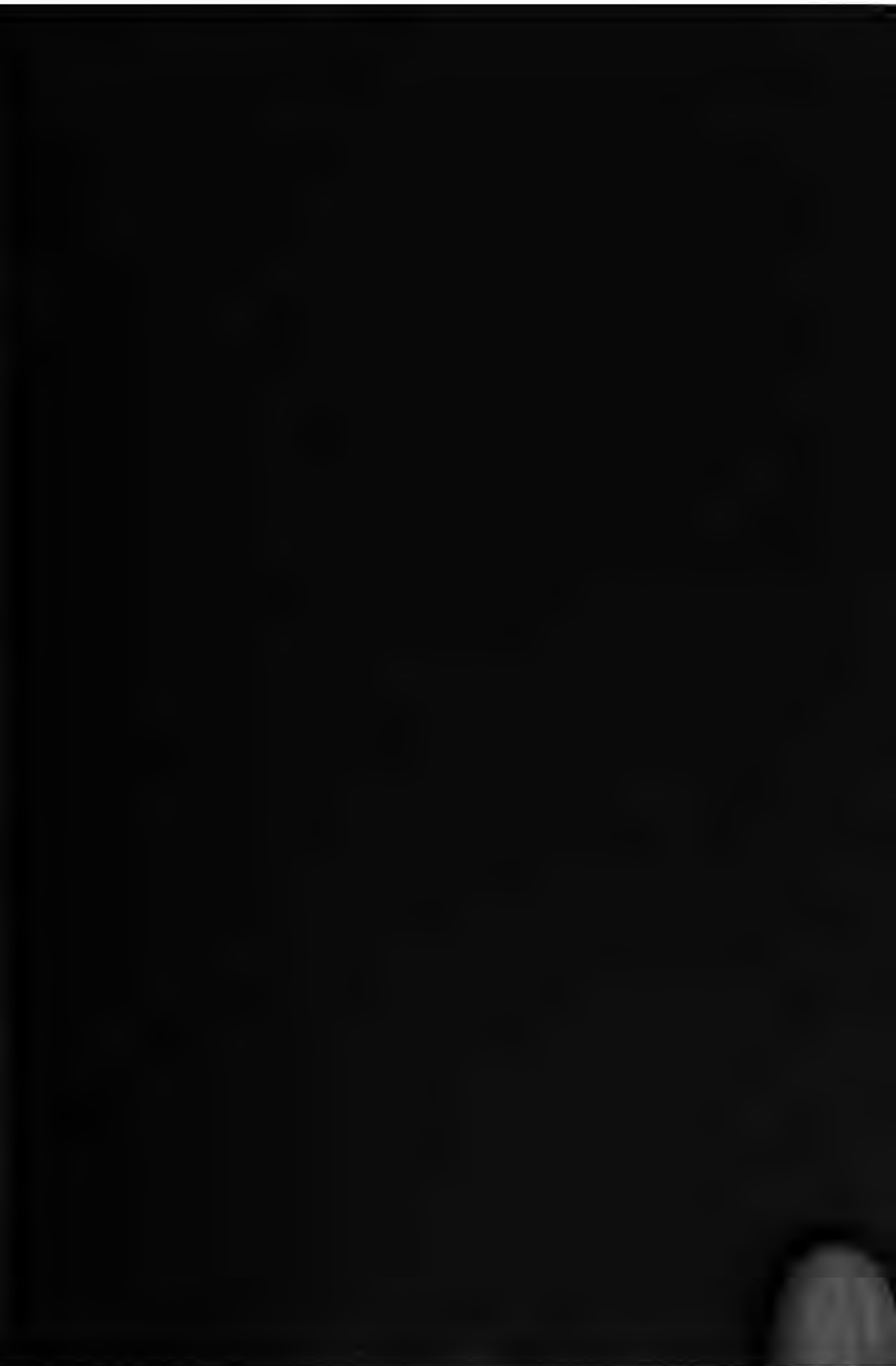
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THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY.

VOL. II.

THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY

BY

M. C. STIRLING

AUTHOR OF

"A TRUE MAN,"

"THE PRINCESS OF SILVERLAND,"

&c., &c.

AURREY. What's in the book?

HUBERT. Why, nothing new or strange;
Honour and love do battle o'er a pledge,
Calm lives flow on from childhood to the grave,
And own the mighty bond of circumstance;
A tale of every day.

Love's Triumph.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THE GRAHAMS OF INVERMOY.

CHAPTER I.

THE GRAHAM FAMILIES.

THE year 1813 had sped in the quiet village of Invermoy much as its precursors had done and its successors were likely to do. Some feeble lives that linked the present with an older day had passed from among those steep-roofed cottages, leaving others, scarcely less feeble, to take their places and be looked up to as the oldest inhabitants. One or two adventurous spirits, weary of monotony, had gone out to seek

fortune or find failure in the great world ; here and there accident or illness had crippled a sturdy labourer or active housewife, and called forth the helpful charity of the poor, and the yearly crowd of helpless infants had entered on their lives of toil.

Twelve months can contain much to those who, like Duncan Graham, are players in a great game, but the same period fleets away with unnoted rapidity to those who, like Miss Mary, can only distinguish one week from another by the recurring Sabbaths that divide them.

Once, indeed, she enjoyed a little variety, for Invermoy himself begged her to come and stay at the House a while with his wife. It was soon after that angry letter to Mr. Barton had been written that this invita-

tion was given, and honest Allan Graham must have been sore puzzled ere he was reduced to consulting Miss Mary about his wife's condition. Not that he said much, but what would have been a trifling remark from a more communicative person was a great admission from a man of as few words as he.

"Come and stay with Jean," he had said, "I think Duncan's never out of her mind, and she's not well. She doesn't like Mr. Barton, you know," he added, tentatively, not sure how far Jean herself had spoken on the subject. Miss Mary nodded encouragingly, and he continued, "I dare say she's right, you know she's quick-witted, but one mustn't be too hard upon people, and I wish she could think more kindly of him."

"So she will in time, Allan; one often takes a thing hardly at first that one gets reconciled to after," and as she looked at her cousin Miss Mary thought of a day years ago when she had taken hardly the news he came to discuss with her in this very room. He remembered it too, as he sat there, and though he did not allude to it directly, she felt that the memory of it underlay his words when he said, heartily,

"I hope it may be so, meantime come and cheer her, Mary; you've been a good friend to her and me."

"Thank you, Allan; company will do Jean good, I daresay, but I'm not so young as I was, and I don't feel active enough to be always running up to see her. I'll come to-morrow to stay, if you'll send

for my trunk, and, you'll see, she'll be friends with Mr. Barton yet."

Miss Mary was a wise woman, having the wisdom that comes of a quiet, constant heart. She did not say to the husband that her influence was to mollify Jean, but rather that she would come right of herself, nor did she afterwards tell the wife that a word had been breathed to her on the subject of her condition. She only determined to do her best to calm her irritation, and she set about her task discriminatingly. She went up to Invermoy in the morning, for, as she said, there was no need to make ready a dinner just to have the scraps wasted, so she packed up her possessions early, gave Phemie her first week's board wages and sent her off to her mother's, and having seen her

trunk into the little cart driven by Hughie Morrison, she locked the door of the cottage and put the key into the ample pocket that she wore tied on under her dress.

Miss Mary had not slept from under her own roof for years, so that this was quite an event. She might, and at one time did, receive plenty of invitations from the county people; but, as we know, she kept no carriage, and therefore it suited her better to stay at home.

“You see, my dear,” she naïvely remarked to a very old acquaintance, “it is a great expense to hire a chaise for three days every now and then, and though you may say one’s keep costs one nothing, yet the bit of meat that I eat does not come to near the price of the journey, not to mention

the vails to the domestics, and the trouble of arranging Phemie's meals in my absence. I couldn't be always sending her home to board, and she's but a young thing to leave alone in the house. So, my dear, I'm glad to see you when you're here at Invermoy and can step over to tea, or maybe when I come to dinner, as I've done to-night, but I can't go gadding about to my friends like a fashionable lady from Edinburgh."

Thus it came to be generally understood that Miss Mary did not visit, and no one esteemed her the less for her prudence. Neither did anyone think the worse of her for coming to the Invermoy parties, year after year, in the same grey satin gown, with the fine lace ruffles and amethyst ornaments. In that homely, friendly

society people congratulated each other on the well preserved state of their garments rather than on their novelty. The Lady Grizzel was of the oldest family in the countryside, and Mrs. Buchanan's husband owned wide stretches of farm and heather, yet they wore their thick silks with content, season after season, and were pleasantly interested, but neither envious nor critical, when young Mrs. Macpherson brought a newer cut or a fresher material from Edinburgh in her trousseau.

They were not like a certain person of my acquaintance, who told me with a pinched smile that he remembered every dress he saw, and that not a single woman could cheat him into fancying she had a new costume, however cleverly she might have disguised the old one. He had a wonder-

ful memory that gentleman, and an eye that should have belonged to Worth, or some other man-milliner, but he was not what I call a pleasant person to know. I always felt that he was examining my dresses, and sometimes longed to say to him, "Yes, sir, you are quite right, this *is* the old skirt with a new trimming, and I am very proud of the way in which I have done it up."

The Invermoy visitors were for the most part of a heartier sort, and came fully prepared to enjoy the three days which formed the regular period of their stay. There was first the "rest day," during which dames and maids, men and horses, were supposed to be shaking into their places and recovering from their sixteen or twenty miles drive. Then there was

the "guest day," when the fatted calf was made ready, and the neighbours who were near at hand, including Miss Mary, came to dine and went away afterwards, with carefully lit lamps and many warnings, as to the state of the roads. Then there was the "pressed day," when the visitors, being persuaded to stay, partook of the ample remains of the previous night's superabundance, and on the fourth morning trunks were packed, adieux made, return visits planned, and guest and host parted with mutual good will.

It was a friendlier way of doing things than ours, in spite of our modern luxuries. When we scramble through society as we do through life, when town existence is a labour, and country houses are like hotels, when we cannot be content unless we

possess (but don't always pay for) dresses by the score, and shoot pheasants by the hundred, there seems to be something amiss. We cannot help suspecting—those of us, that is, who have time to think—that in our anxiety to enjoy everything we have lost the power of really savouring anything.

But to return to Miss Mary. Not having been on a visit for so long, it took her some time to settle into her new quarters; she could not adapt herself readily to them, and required to reflect seriously before deciding which drawer should contain her pelisse and which her under-clothes, and whether the grey satin which she had brought, just in case it should be needed, should be laid flat in another one or hung up in the wall-press. She finally settled

on the wall-press, for no doubt creases must come in a satin in time, however neatly it is folded, and this was a fine chance for taking them out by letting it hang for a bit. So she pinned towels over the shimmering skirt, and silver paper round the lace ruffles, and shut the press door, taking out the key, for servants will pry as we all know, and she shuddered at the bare idea of her best dress being handled by uncaredful fingers.

At last, when everything was arranged and certain trifles placed on the dressing-table, less for use than in case the household should think she had not everything suitable for the Laird's first cousin, Miss Mary descended to the drawing-room, and taking her knitting, established herself in a chair near the fire, with the air of a

woman who has done her duty, and done it well.

She had determined that she would not be the first to broach the subject of the Bartons, but Jean did not keep her long waiting ere she began it herself. Her heart was so full of it that she was ready to pour out her thoughts to any kindly listener, and none could be kinder than Miss Mary; besides that, being one of the family, Jean felt it no treason to discuss matters with her under any and every aspect.

It so happened that there had been less intercourse than usual between the House and the Cottage of late. Miss Mary had had a bad cold—"a sair hoast" little Phemie called it—Mrs. Graham had been ailing also, and from these causes, and

perhaps also a certain reticence on both sides, Duncan's engagement had been but little mentioned between them.

Now, however, they were both prepared to canvass it thoroughly, and Miss Mary listened on this afternoon, asking a leading question now and again, and so inducing Mrs. Graham to unburden herself freely. By the time the tale was fully told, Invermoy was coming in from the farm, and a pleased smile glowed on his honest but somewhat anxious face as he opened the door and saw the two women in close conversation by the red fire.

Next day Miss Mary began to carry out the scheme she had formed while lying awake in the huge green-curtained bed in the big bed-room upstairs.

She shrewdly divined that, by agreeing

entirely with Mrs. Graham, she would in time induce her to modify her opinions, provided that that end could be accomplished at all. Invermoy had tried to reason with her, forgetting, poor man, that he was not dealing with one of his own sex, but with a woman whose jealous affections had been wounded—than whom a more unreasonable creature does not exist. Of course he had failed, and left his wife more than ever convinced that her unlucky son had been inveigled into an engagement, that Mr. Barton was unscrupulous and designing, and his daughter probably a proud, extravagant Englishwoman, whose coming would bring misery and ruin upon Invermoy.

Miss Mary took all this for granted, and in recommencing the subject expressed

her regret that Duncan should have been so easily duped.

“But, of course, poor laddie, he was young and ignorant, and, as you observed, Jean, might be easily led away. Though I must say I didn’t think it of him either. I thought he had plenty of mother-wit of his own; however, if he has made a bad choice he will rue it, and so shall we all—poor dear boy!”

Mrs. Graham had not much to say to this; it had not occurred to her to view the matter in this light, and at the moment she did not know exactly how to reply. But when Miss Mary continued to talk in the same strain, sighing over Duncan’s folly and regretting that these strange folk in London should have found him so easy a prey, the mother’s instinct rose in

her, and she began to be angry with her friend. She might have remained silent, had not Miss Mary tried her too far by making comparisons between the cousins.

"Duncan's a fine laddie," said she, "and one you may well be proud of, but from what you say he cannot have been as wise as we could have wished. Now there's my nephew, though he hasn't Duncan's smiling ways, he has a long head, and when he has to choose a wife I don't think he will be mistaken in her as your poor boy has been."

"Oh, he's a worthy lad, no doubt," returned Mrs. Graham, rather hotly, "but I don't think you should speak of my son as though he were just a gomeril, Mary. It's not what I expected from you, you've always been so kind to him."

“Eh ! my dear !” said crafty Miss Mary, peering over her work. “I call him a gomeril ! Why, I know nothing but what you’ve told me yourself.”

“Well, well, I never said any harm of the girl,” replied Mrs. Graham, pettishly, “I daresay she may be good enough, only that she’s English. It’s her father that puts me beside myself.”

“Oh, I understand now ; well, it will be a great comfort if the girl is pleasant ; ‘it’s a far cry to Lochow,’ as the saying goes, and very likely we may none of us ever see Mr. Barton. At any rate, when Duncan comes home after seeing so much of the world, he will be better able to guide himself than when he left this.”

“I suppose he will be more of a man,” said Jean, softly, thinking of the bright

young face that had left her but a few months since.

“To be sure he will, and, Jean, perhaps this engagement may have been a dispensation of Providence; for, do you know, some of the officers with the army are actually marrying Spanish ladies.”

“Lord preserve us! Where did you hear that, Mary? The ne’er-do-weels, to think of such a thing!”

“It’s true; Mrs. McAndrew heard it from Mrs. Macpherson who has a brother-in-law with the army, and he wrote that young McIlroy of the Glen was just going to marry a Spaniard, a beautiful girl, he said, but a Papist!”

“Gude guide us! if my Duncan were to do the like I’d break my heart.”

“Oh, but Duncan is quite safe, you see,

because he has pledged his word, and he's a man of honour. I have always understood that an early engagement had a very steadying effect on a young man," continued Miss Mary, drawing herself up with a little air of propriety and dignity.

"I daresay you're right; anything would be better than a Papist. Dear, dear, I'm almost glad my laddie's safe from that at least," sighed Jean, with a sudden recognition that worse things might have befallen her.

Thus Miss Mary laboured in her mission, and with such success that ere a week was over Mrs. Graham had been heard to admit that "maybe she had been mistaken, she hoped so for everyone's sake, but if Mr. Barton was at all disposed to take an advantage, she had

no doubt but her boy would be a match for him."

Whereupon Miss Mary folded her hands over her knitting, and leant back for a few moments, while her faithful heart rejoiced that the dove of peace was returning to her cousin's house and that she had been the means of wiling it back.

Kind faithful soul; hers was an unimportant life, one that would pass away, leaving nothing to chronicle, and yet it is by such as she that the little angles of other lives are smoothed down and the empty corners filled up. Most of us have a Miss Mary among our acquaintances; it is well for us if we can also say she is among our friends.

During these months things had been going well with James Dewar, and conse-

quently with Miss Mary's little hoard. Tod of the Candleriggs gave a sufficient number of orders, and, which was important, paid promptly; so that, although Dewar's percentage was a very trifling one, still, as he himself said, "There's mony an ear o' corn gangs to ae bushel." Accustomed as he was to live frugally, he was now laying by money, placing it, at Tod's suggestion, in the St. Magus bank, managed by Stewart and another Tod, a brother of the draper's.

He had no intention of remaining with McHaffie and Spait beyond the time of his apprenticeship. Robert Dewar shook his white head, and murmured the adage about "rowin' stanes," but his son laughed good-humouredly, and bid him

wait and see whether he was not making the best possible choice.

Only the old man and Miss Mary were aware of the lad's intentions ; others supposed him to have an eye to a partnership in the attorney's office, and so well and carefully did he work there that even Mr. Spait was forced to acknowledge that he was a creditable young man, provided that he went on as he had begun. Mr. Spait could not praise without a reservation of some sort, and most people thought it a great thing if he mentioned a name without positive disapprobation.

Miss Mary had by this time acquired some knowledge of interest, both simple and compound, and acting thereupon she handed her savings to Dewar at shorter

intervals, no longer feeling it necessary for her dignity that she should wait until she had gathered together a fixed amount.

When young Allan Graham went to London she was greatly tempted to withdraw a small sum as a parting gift for him, but she thought better of it; the boy was but a boy, and would fritter it away upon useless amusements, whereas she wished it to be of substantial service to him when he should have gained wisdom.

By-and-by, when that fatal gazette had been published after Toulouse, and the first shock of her brother's death had passed away, she bethought her that there would be many sudden expenses falling upon her nephew, and she did forward to him a few pounds, which were received with gratitude as well as surprise. Miss

Mary was wont to say in after years that Providence had clearly guided her in this most fortunate action.

James Dewar continued to behave as well as any young man could be expected to behave with whom everything goes comfortably, but too much good fortune is not, as a rule, productive of an agreeable tone of mind. There is a self-assertive contentment about your ever-successful man that is very trying to weak humanity, a kind of "Look at me" expression which is only paralleled by the offensive vigour of one who has risen very early on a winter's morning when other people love a warm couch.

That man comes into the breakfast-room rubbing his hands with odious energy, and torments his shivering neigh-

bours with assurances that there is nothing easier to take or more delightful than a half-frozen tub. He too, in fact, has achieved something, and considers himself, therefore, a privileged person.

There was no denying that James Dewar carried his head a little higher than was needful as he trudged whistling through the Invermoy streets. He did not know that he was conceited or patronising, but in his strong youth he felt as though he could and would mould his circumstances to his will, and he pitied these easy-going villagers who took theirs so meekly as they found them.

Kate Macrae, looking after him as he bid her a jaunty good night, smiled somewhat grimly.

"Ye'll need to get a fa', or meet a wheen folk bigger than yersel,' Jamie my

man, or ye'll craw owre crouse, I'm think-in'!" quoth she, and probably she was right.

For the present, however, nothing occurred to disturb Tod's young agent in his happy security; such lessons as he needed are usually reserved for those who have climbed higher than he.

I once saw a little boy watching the struggles of an ant that was laboriously dragging a load of crumb up a steep incline. With the maliciousness of his sex, that child waited till the hapless insect had reached the top, and then, with ruthless fingers, he deposited it at the bottom, that he might see it once more re-ascend. Some such spirit, one might imagine, watches over the career of many a toiler after wealth, not placing difficulties

in the path, even removing them at times, till the labourer's foot is touching the summit, and then, down goes stepping-stone and footway, and he finds himself where he was at the outset—ah, not quite, for youth and strength are gone too, and in time hope goes also. The ant's blind instinct prompts it to climb again unweariedly, the man's vivid memory helps to break his heart.

Spring was blushing into summer when the treaties of peace were signed and the British army returned home from France.

When the ship that brought the Guards dropped her anchor in the Thames, Duncan Graham, as a great favour, was allowed a few hours' leave of absence. Only a few hours, for every officer must be present when the regiment should

march into the city, but it was daybreak now, and the entry could not be till the afternoon. A boat speedily conveyed him to the nearest wharf, and as he approached the Strand the early sun cast a golden glow on the dark brick houses and on the glittering statue of King Charles, and seemed to be somehow akin to the clang of the trumpet sounding the reveillée in the neighbouring barracks. As Graham strode eagerly along the unequal pavement by Charing Cross the dim figures crouching under low archways or groping among the uncleared rubbish, looked up to see whose step rang so clearly, and some gazed with a moment's interest after the square-shouldered young figure in the worn uniform ere they returned to their grimy task.

At last Duncan paused before the familiar door; the day of his arrival had been of course uncertain, and he could hardly expect to see Ellen at this hour.

If he rang, the servant would of course tell her he was there, and he had set his heart upon taking her unawares, so there was nothing for it but to walk up and down till there was some likelihood of her being up. He was keenly anxious to be with her, for during the voyage he, like every soul on board, had been more or less influenced by the tender pleasure that wells up in the hearts and talk of those who after long absence are "coming home."

Concha had passed out of his life like a dream, and none of the rich Southern faces that had since smiled on his Eng-

lish uniform, had attracted him, except for the moment. It was the piquancy of the position, as well as the beauty of the soi-disant nurse, that had fired his imagination as he strolled among the oak woods in Castile when the day's march was done.

Now he had turned back to the love that was real enough below his passing fancies, and time had never dragged so slowly as while he watched the sunlight creeping by inches up the tall houses at the end of the street.

He knew he might venture in early, for Ellen always came down to arrange the tables in the drawing-room with her own hands. Happily, one of the servants who knew him, came out to sweep the steps, and he was thus enabled to enter quietly.

The girls were in the drawing-room, dusting the china as he had expected, and the door was ajar. He heard Agnes speaking.

"Surely Duncan will be here very soon now ; if the troops sailed when we were led to expect they would, the voyage must be nearly over."

"I hope so, I feel as though I could not bear these uncertainties much longer," returned Ellen, with a weary sigh, and the listener waited to hear no more.

A sign to Agnes, who was facing him, barely repressed her exclamation as he entered, but ere it was uttered, his arms were round her sister, and one of the Rector's favourite cups was lying shivered on the floor.

Mr. Barton took the loss of his cup

philosophically and made merry during breakfast at the expense of the lovers, who were too happy to heed the jokes levelled at them. When the meal was over, however, his expression changed, and with a business-like air he requested Duncan to follow him to the library. Ellen timidly asked if she might not speak to him first, but her father sharply desired her to be silent, and Duncan, greatly surprised, was leaving the room when quiet Agnes glided up to him and whispered,

“Be patient with my father, for he has been greatly troubled.”

It was well that he had received this warning, for Mr. Barton chose to express his indignation at what he termed Mrs. Graham's unjust aspersions, in no very measured language.

In proportion as he saw that his companion was ready to share his views, his wrath appeared to moderate itself, and when Duncan read his mother's unlucky letter, and flushing to the roots of his brown hair, uttered a hasty oath, Mr. Barton even felt it his duty to rebuke him in a fatherly way.

"Gently, my dear boy, gently! We must restrain ourselves, you know, though I am glad to perceive that you feel with me in this matter."

"Mr. Barton, that letter is unpardonable—but I can't tell my mother so; what can I say or do? Good heavens! does my father know of this?"

"Mr. Graham knows that some such letter was written, for he saw my reply, and I must say he has behaved with more

consideration, though he did not, as I had hoped, disavow any participation in your mother's sentiments. Here is his letter to me, you will see that he wished to defer any discussion until your return."

"Yes, that's a pleasanter document to read, but now that I am here we must act, not write, sir; I shall be getting leave soon to go north, let me take my wife with me, and I will answer for it she shall be fittingly received."

Mr. Barton pouted his under lip ominously.

"Out of the question, Graham," he said, using the more formal name in lieu of the familiar Duncan. "Do you suppose I can allow my daughter to marry in haste, without any of the usual formalities and arrangements? I forgive you the sugges-

tion only on account of the feeling that prompted it. Besides, you have but a small allowance, which your father might discontinue after such a step, and you forget that I am a poor man—I may say quite a poor man—and have a second daughter to provide for.”

“The estate’s entailed, sir,” said unsuspecting Duncan, “and whatever my mother may have written, I am sure my father will put no difficulties in my way. I will write and ask him to come to town; that, perhaps, would be the easiest thing. The post is a slow affair at best.”

“Undoubtedly that would be most fitting, and if you and he can make proper settlements I will withdraw my objection to your speedy marriage. My poor daughter has suffered much during your absence,

but I have no doubt you will teach her to forget it; I do not doubt you in any way, Graham."

Duncan shook hands heartily with his future father-in-law, determining that the trust placed in him should be fully merited. The wary Rector knew his man, knew that to trust him was to bind him fast, and that to throw a slight difficulty in his way was the surest method of keeping him steady.

Ellen had read or shown him long passages in her lover's letters, some of them alluding to Concha, and the shrewd old man comprehended the writer's character far better than he did himself, and better than did the recipient of those hasty epistles. Ellen had been easily won, therefore she might perhaps seem the less

precious ; it was well that there should be a show of dignity and pride on her father's part, or this hot-headed boy would imagine that his path was too clear to be worth the following out. The Rector was quite right, and his judicious management coupled with his daughter's real attractiveness soon made Duncan Graham a more devoted lover than ever.

His letter came like a thunderclap on Jean Graham. That her boy should be in London, and not hurry to her as fast as the "Lightning" Mail Coach could bring him, that he should even beg his father to travel southwards in order to hasten this English marriage, seemed to her a reversal of all that was right and dutiful. Duncan had been careful to propose that she should accompany his father,

and was ashamed to feel, as he penned the words, a secret hope that she would not come.

He loved her as sons love their mothers, with a half patronising affection that accepts the maternal devotion as a matter of course, a kind of common-place instinct. This special mother, however, with her peasant speech and sombre gowns, was rather a trial to a son accustomed to good society, and Duncan never doubted that he understood good society, for was he not a soldier, with a soldier's estimate of his position? He had seen something of good Spanish families, for in the unexpected changes brought about by the war, classes were mingled in a way undreamt of during sleepy years of peace. In London, on the contrary, he had hardly any

acquaintances; now and again he dined with some brother officer whose home was in town, but he felt himself too great a stranger in these crowded rooms to care much about such invitations.

Moreover, after so long an absence, every officer in the regiment, from the colonel down to the youngest ensign, was anxious to revisit his own relations and gather up again the dropped threads in the web of family interests. Thus there was, perhaps, less of comradeship than usual amongst them, except when they found common friends; and Duncan, passing his days with Ellen, met none of the *élite* whose sons entered the Guards, but was gradually absorbed into the Rector's circle, where the robust middle class, so peculiar to England, greatly predominated.

Here his heirship added to his importance as a Peninsular hero, and he received an amount of adulation that was as unwholesome for him as monetary success was for James Dewar.

Duncan's generous nature would have felt no pride had he possessed gold in plenty, but his youthful heart was not proof against the admiring glances of Ellen's companions and the after-dinner questioning of the stout, elderly gentlemen who occasionally took their places at the Rector's board.

He could not but know that he had done his duty to his commanding officer's satisfaction, and if over and above this pleasant consciousness people perpetually told him that he was a fine fellow—by Gad, sir, an uncommonly fine young chap—

well, he could hardly help agreeing with them. And can we blame him, dear reader? When you had that lovely costume from Elise, and all said you were the belle of the county ball, didn't you think that perhaps they were right, though till then you had wished you were half as pretty as fair-haired Bella Hamilton?

Ah, but Bella couldn't afford a toilette from Elise, and dress does so much for one that, after all—perhaps—you really were the best looking. And you, dear madam, when Mrs. Brown told you, in confidence of course, that Lady Black—(the wife of the great doctor, you know)—that Lady Black had said your dinners were far more *recherchés* than Mrs. Bounce's, even though Alderman Bounce does get

such first-rate turtle, didn't you believe her, and stifle those doubts which had racked your breast as to whether that *Suprême de Poulet à la Royale*, which you didn't taste, had quite its proper allowance of truffles? Of course you did, and small blame to you, and small blame to our friend Duncan if he began to feel that he was really rather a fine young man, and that he must be a great source of satisfaction to his father and mother. Yet no, he knew his mother was unhappy about him,—still it was not his fault if she would not come to London, and as to expecting him to travel all the way to Scotland just in order that she should see him before he was married, why, it was absurd to expect such a thing.

It would be such a waste of money too ;

Duncan began to think of that quite virtuously when the cause for the expenditure was not consonant with his own wish. Altogether, the scheme could not be entertained for a moment, and he wrote another letter pointing out the wisdom of his determination in a slightly condescending tone.

On receipt of this letter, Invermoy once more invited his wife to accompany him to London, and once more she refused.

“What would I do in yon great town, Allan, and among the English folk? I’d just hold your hand and feel fit to greet like a strayed bairn if anyone spoke to me! And do you think I want to see the strangers that have wiled my laddie from me? No, no, if Duncan is grown such a fine gentleman that he can’t come and see

his mother, she can e'en bide her time. Maybe he'll need her some day yet. Go you your ways to England, Allan, and the Lord be with you on your journey !"

Thus Jean, in her wounded pride, and the Laird as usual forbore to argue with her. Good husband as he was, he was not averse to a short trip by himself to the metropolis, and he felt that his acquaintance with his future daughter-in-law would begin more prosperously in his wife's absence.

To London he therefore went alone, and with his hale common sense and kindness brought a spark of comfort to poor Elspeth Graham, and earned the unwilling respect of the Rector.

Ellen Barton and he made friends at once ; her frank face and self-possessed

manner delighted him, while her devotion to Duncan gratified his growing pride in his son.

The preliminaries of the marriage were speedily arranged, tolerably to Mr. Barton's satisfaction, and a day fixed upon early in June.

When all was settled, Invermoy went away to take his evening meal with his cousins, and impart his news to them, leaving Duncan to spend his time in more congenial fashion.

The lodgings occupied by Mrs. Ian Graham were small and plainly furnished. Between the window and the fireplace stood one deep arm-chair covered with leather, once black, but now worn grey with much friction.

The Laird, who was weary with treading

the unaccustomed pavement, was about to seat himself in this, after greeting his cousins, but an abrupt exclamation from Elspeth stopped him.

“Stay ! not there !” she cried, sharply, with a quick contraction of her brows ; then, as he paused, she went up to him, holding out her thin hands.

“Forgive me, dear Allan ; that was my Ian’s constant resting-place, and I cannot bear to see anyone else occupy it. I sit there, thinking, thinking, all the weary day. It does me good to lay my head where his used to lie.”

“My poor soul,” said Invermoy, pityingly, “it does not matter where I sit, go and take your usual place.”

The widow complied, and as she leant back, her pale worn face and white cap

looking more deathlike against the sombre chair, her cousin thought she could not be long for this life. He began his tale abruptly, for he was more moved than he cared to show.

“Duncan is to be married early in June, and then he and his wife are to come home for a while. It will be a great change for us all.”

“Indeed it will. Everything about me is changing,” replied Elspeth, feebly.

“You have never told us how you like the Bartons, cousin,” said the younger Allan.

“Ellen’s a fine wise-like lassie,” said Invermoy. “I’ve no fears about her, she’ll be a good wife for a soldier. The other sister is bonny enough, but she never opens her lips. I’m glad Duncan didn’t

take a liking to her ; I'd as soon have a china figure in the house, like one of those new-fangled German things her father thinks so much of."

" And he, Mr. Barton himself ; how do you like him ?"

" He cannot be a good man ; Ian thought ill of his countenance," said Elspeth, positively.

" Did he ? Well, I am somewhat of his way of thinking." Invermoy paused, and a slow smile twinkled in his eyes as he recalled what had passed between him and the Rector. " A shrewd fellow, Allan," he continued, looking up. " He talked as much, and used as many fine words as though he had been preaching a trial sermon ; but the sense was not sound, and I told him so. ' What you say may be true, Mr. Barton,'

said I, 'but you will excuse my remarking, it has nothing to do with the business in hand. I'm a plain man, sir, and I like to keep to the point.' He looked a bit astonished, for I suppose he expected me to be struck with his long-winded phrases. When he did come to business he found I was a match for him. We do know something in the north, don't we, Allan?" chuckled the Laird. "Though what can you expect," he added, turning to Elspeth, "from a papistical English parson? If it wasn't for Duncan, I'd be loth to stay many Sabbaths in this town. What with bell ringing and paid singers and kists o' whistles * in every church, you might as well be in Rome itself on the Lord's day.

* Old Scotch name for a church organ.

I suppose you're getting used to it, Allan, eh?"

"One must in time, you know," replied the young man, who would not for worlds have confessed that he had spent the hours of late with Fanny Jutsom, when his mother, too ill to go out herself, had believed him to be at church.

"Ay, travellers keep strange company, but I've no liking for this kind myself. Change may be well for a wee while, just to give you a flavour of it, even as you put a pinch of salt in your porridge. And that reminds me, Duncan will have to teach his wife to make porridge and a few other decent dishes that they don't know on this side the Border. The lassie would make me give up my ale at breakfast to-day and drink a cup of that new mixture

they call saloop, but, Lord bless me ! I'd as soon take one of old Pearson's black draughts !" and Invermoy laughed heartily at the recollection of his own discomfiture.

"We can give you a Scotch breakfast here, Allan," said Elspeth, rousing herself when there was a question of hospitality to interest her. "I'll make you a basin of porridge myself, though I can't give you Scotch cream to sup them with. And you shall have scones too, for the boy there has found a worthy man from Clackmannan, who is a baker and lives not far from here."

"Yes, and he'll be glad to bake cake or bannocks for anyone that can eat them ; he's a thriving man, but he says the English are ignorant folk and don't understand good victuals when they see them."

“By St. Andrew, he’s right!” cried Invermoy. “I’ll come with a good will, Elspeth, to see a table fit for an honest man to make a meal at. But how did you foregather with this baker, Allan?”

“Oh, the boy cleans our office, and he and I knew each other for countrymen,” answered Allan, and the explanation sufficed, for did not Scotchmen claim each other as brethren in this great city, whatever the differences of nation? “Perhaps you’d like to go there, Cousin Allan, he has a large room over his shop where a few of us meet of an evening. Most of the members are younger than you, but there’s a Dr. McCombie, and a lawyer or two, and Mr. Dalgleish, of Dalgleish and Stuart,—you must have heard of them, the great West India merchants.”

"Not I! Why, laddie, have you been so long away that you have forgotten our ways in the north? What have we quiet farmers to do with your West India merchants? If yon Dalgleish is one of the Pitmaldie Dalgleishes, then I know something about him; but it's thanks to his blood, lad, not to his money or his merchandise," repeated Invermoy, with more asperity than was usual with him, for he had some of the family dislike to commerce.

"He's a brother of Pitmaldie's," replied Allan, shortly.

"Preserve me! It's Dugald Dalgleish, that was at the High School with me! Well, well, to think of meeting him up here. I'd like to go with you, Allan; is it a club, or what sort of a gathering?"

"Not exactly a club, cousin, though whoever goes there pays some trifle for the use of the room, and you can order your toddy as if it were an hotel; real Glenlivat, old Mackie vows it is too. Any member can take in one guest, but you can't go regularly unless you're a Scotchman, and have been brothered in a Curling Club."

"Capital! That's the place for me," exclaimed the Laird, almost forgetting the sad-faced woman in the arm-chair, in his delight at finding he was to enjoy some congenial society; but his forgetfulness did not hurt her; she had attended at first to the conversation, but gradually it ceased to interest her, a film as of drowsiness came over her eyes, and with head slightly thrown back, she passed into the dreamy

state in which most of her time was spent. As Invermoy and her son bade her good night, she scarcely raised her heavy lids to reply, and when the former, alarmed at her appearance, would have made some remark, his companion drew him away, saying, in a low voice,

“Do not disturb her; she is happier so, and it does her no harm.”

Much shocked, Invermoy left the room without speaking, and the door had not closed ere Elspeth had relapsed into the same silent, death-like repose.

CHAPTER II.

MEETINGS AND PARTINGS.

A VERY motley company met over the baker's shop in St. Andrew's Lane, for as the place became more widely known Scotchmen of all ranks visited it, some from curiosity only, some as guests for a single evening, but all in a spirit of good fellowship. Here, as at Invermoy and many other places, the baker became a central figure round whom others grouped themselves, attracted by who knows what pleasant scents from the oven,

what congenial *bonhomie* in the face of the owner of the shop.

David Mackie, when he came up at a venture from the north, brought with him in his meagre bundle a bunch of heather, and rising from journeyman to foreman, from foreman to master, had preserved that relic of the old home as though it had been a charm. It hung now, shrivelled and blackened, over the fireplace in the low-ceiled room where he had begun by inviting a couple of fellow-countrymen, struggling men like himself, to smoke a pipe and drink a tumbler of toddy. Somehow the invitation was often repeated, for Mackie's wife was dead and the evenings were lonesome. It was soon proposed that each should in turn defray the expenses

of the meeting; then a guest or two appeared, introduced with an apology, and so welcomed that they came again. Thus the meeting grew, and when Allan first went there he found a party of ten or twelve assembled. A little kindness shown to Mackie's son procured him his invitation, which he accepted less from a desire to go than from a fear that a refusal might be ascribed to pride. Since then he had returned so often that he might now be considered almost an *habitué*. Of course David Mackie knew all about him, as he did about everyone who frequented his house, and therefore quite understood the relationship when Allan introduced his cousin.

"This is Invermoy, Mackie; he's in

London for a while, and I brought him for a glass of Glenlivet and a crack."

It did the elder Allan's heart good to hear himself again called by his rightful title instead of by the ordinary form, the "Mr. Graham," which the Rector dragged into every sentence, and which sounded to the Laird's ears so bare and unfamiliar. Here he seemed to be recovering his individuality, and he returned the baker's greeting with a heartiness that brought him at once into favour.

The club-room had been improved since its earlier tenancy, the rough benches were replaced by wooden chairs, some heather, on which the colour yet lingered, hung across the older bunch; it was a present from Mr. Dalgleish, and an impecunious clerk, with a turn for drawing, had shown

his gratitude for sundry free gifts of toddy and supper too, by painting under it in broad letters,

“Hame is hame, be it ever sae hamely.”

“I think you’ve an old acquaintance of mine here, Mr. Mackie,” said Invermoy, looking round ere he took a proffered chair, “one of the Dalgleishes of Pit-maldie.”

“Ay, indeed, was he a freend o’ yours, sir?—weel, it’s his night, but it’s no his hour, for he’s as punctual as the auld clock o’ St. Giles’s. It’ll no ha’e chappit eight afore ye’ll hear his step on the stair, or if maybe it has chappit, it’s the clock that’s no richt, no Mr. Dalgleish that’s wrang!”

“That’s just the same Dugald as when we were laddies,—no matter what jinks

were going on in the school-yard, Dugald was in the class-room before the bell had done ringing."

"Punctuality's a grand quality, sir, a grand quality," exclaimed a red-haired, large-boned personage, whom the younger Allan now introduced as Dr. McCombie.

At the mention of his name the Doctor rose, and, tumbler in hand, performed a profound bow.

"Your health, Invermoy, and I think I speak in the name of the company, being, I may say, an old acquaintance of most of them, when I tell you we are happy to see you here to-night."

"I am obliged to you, and wish you good health, sir," returned Invermoy, with a bow that the Doctor considered very inferior in style to his own. After this

interruption he continued, speaking with a strong nasal accent,

“As I was saying, sir, punctuality’s a grand quality, and the want of it brings many a well-favoured youth to misfortune. I remember a remarkable instance of that in the career of a friend of mine.”

“Indeed; will you favour us with it?” asked Invermoy, on whom the worthy Doctor had fastened, as he did on each new-comer, in order that he might tell his oft-told tales.

“Well, Invermoy, my young friend was a youth of parts, I may say of undoubted talent. His profession was the same as my own, and he had ambition, sir. A man with talent and ambition should succeed, you would think, but there was no punctuality in him. He loved a joyous

evening, sir, as a sociable youth should—he shone among his companions, and they beguiled him of his time. They tempted him with the apple of friendship, and he found it dust at the core. A kind and noble friend used interest for him with John Hunter—here's his health—I never mention that great man without drinking his health—and an appointment was made for this young man to see him at an early hour, with a prospect of becoming his assistant. A career was before him, and he called his companions together the previous night and bade them wish him luck. Sir, that appointment was never kept, and the post was filled up ere the poor youth presented himself to apologise. Hunter—his health—had somehow heard the cause of the delay, and would show no

pity ; a sad case—that young man of talent is but a broken creature now—want of punctuality, sir, want of punctuality !”

It was shrewdly suspected that the Doctor was telling his own history, but the usual comments were checked by the entrance of a short, stout gentleman, who opened the door as the fourth stroke of eight sounded from a neighbouring steeple.

“I tell’t ye sae,” whispered Mackie, “there’s the hour and here’s Maister Dalglish. Bide a wee now, and we’ll see if he kens ye ! Gude e’en to ye, sir, there’s a freend o’ yours speirin’ for ye here.”

“A friend of mine,” replied the newcomer, in a fat cheery voice, “where is he then, I only see ‘kent’ faces at present.”

“By the ingle neuk, sir, the guest’s place, you know, though it’s cauld comfort

when there's no a bleeze to cheer ye."

"Oh, I see," returned the stout man, bowing to Invermoy with a puzzled face, "you've the advantage of me, sir."

"And you had the advantage of Jock Ross, when you licked him at the High School for stealing marbles from little Hughie Watt," replied Invermoy, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Allan Graham! Why, bless me, man, I haven't seen you these thirty years and more!" cried Dalgleish, shaking him by the hands. "Mr. Mackie, bring me some of that Jamaica rum of mine, and lemons and hot water. I'll brew you such punch, Allan, as I warrant you've never tasted. Mackie has no license, but you know there's nothing to prevent his keeping a few bottles that belong to his friends.

We'll have a night of it, to be sure—poor Jock Ross, he was a mischievous callant! Lord bless me, more than thirty years ago!"

A meeting between such old friends caused quite a stir in the club-room, chairs were drawn in, and fresh tumblers mixed in anticipation of a jovial night, while the buzz of voices rose higher, and young Allan as he placed himself nearer his cousin thought that for once he need not regret his absence from Mrs. Jntsom's supper-table.

Very soon an indescribable mixture of odours pervaded the room, odours saccharine, spirituous, and fruity, all dominated, as it were, and flavoured with the pungent smell of somewhat new tobacco. While a mild haze hung over the steaming mixtures,

and the smoke coiled itself in slow wreaths to the ceiling, and thence uncertainly towards the gaping chimney, the talk grew rapid and earnest.

Here McCombie, pipe in hand, held a young clerk transfixed with horror while he recalled an incident of his student days, when grim suspicion hung about the dissecting-room, and body-snatching was a possible trade. There a couple of business men discussed the stocks, and, unbending over their national beverage, forgot rivalry in groaning over the loss of certain profits made by them during the war. Yonder another read scraps of news from a broadsheet—how a fresh play was to begin at the Haymarket, and how the fair Duchess of Buckingham had given beer to every man of her county militia while in Winchester,

money to all the wives, and a bowl of punch to every sergeant—a worthy lady was that Duchess.

In and out among the groups passed the honest baker, seeing to the comfort of each ere he sat down beside his own special crony for the gossip in which his heart rejoiced. He endeavoured to be equally civil to all the company, but he certainly lingered in a corner where his boy pored over his book, aided by a pale lad who was thankful to earn a trifle by teaching, and in the intervals of that occupation was eagerly studying the “*Ecce Homo*,” for writing which *Houstoun* was to be tried a few months later. As for *Dalgleish* and *Invermoy*, they talked over their school-boy pranks and the varied fortunes of class-fellows and friends till a goodly

supply of punch had been consumed, and then branched off into comparisons between Scotch and English customs and agriculture, to which Allan listened attentively, as he always did to anything bearing on the ownership or uses of land.

“The English boast a great deal,” said Invermoy, “but if their farmers were half as clever as ours, the country would be richer; why, there’s Sinclair—you know him——”

“Yes, the President of your Agricultural Board; one of the Caithness Sinclairs.”

“The same. Well, look at his book, it’s being used to teach English farmers; just imagine, one of them actually said he thanked God he had never read a book!”

“No doubt they’re pigheaded, but you

have that quality across the Border too," replied Dalglish, who was a good deal Anglicised by his long residence in London.

"Of course there are asses everywhere, and they will always bray; but I maintain that, on the whole, our farmers are a sharp, enterprising set of men. Look at our threshing mills, too; we have in our county alone a hundred and twenty driven by horses, and ten by water."

"Have you, indeed? Well, I admit that's a great point, and they are much needed. The Middlesex Report says the English labourers won't thresh the straw clean even when bread is so dear they can hardly buy it."

"And then your huge barns that cost a fortune and are not needed; and your

hedges ! I wish I had all the ground I saw covered with hedges on my way up to London. Even a snap-dyke would take only half as much."

"In fact, nothing in the south pleases you, Graham," said Dalglish, laughing. "You want to get back to peat reek and Highland cottages. I confess I prefer English ones ; we don't believe here that 'the clartier the cosier !' "

"I allow folk are cleaner here, but cleanliness won't grow crops. On my word, Dugald, you should see some of my fields where the new drains are laid, they're a finer sight than your pavements. I'm like to choke for want of air in this town you're so fond of."

"It's not so breezy as the top of the Calton, but it's a fine city. We merchants

have our pleasures, too ; I like to sit over the fire of a night and think of the ships that are doing our work and carrying the names of Stuart and Dalgleish over half the world. If you were a traveller you'd find those names useful ones in a good many places. Your young cousin there has a mind that his should be as well-known some of these days."

"I'd like it well," said Allan, looking up so eagerly that Invermoy glanced at him in surprise.

"So that's your ambition, laddie, is it ? Ay, ay, men's tastes differ ; but here's to your success," said he, and Dalgleish seconded the toast.

The night was far advanced when the last of the party left the club-room, and if some of them went home unsteadily there

were not a few who took their pleasure more soberly than had been the custom hitherto.

Wednesday, the 10th of June, came at last, but of the marriage ceremony little need be told, for are not all such affairs arranged on exactly the same principles? It is true that some women love to hear in detail what has happened at each one, that dames of forty still read with gusto highly-coloured newspaper accounts of a marriage in high life, and that damsels of seventeen have theories about bridesmaid's dresses. Probably this unflagging interest arises from the same cause as the unfailing tears that flow from the eyes of female spectators when one of these ceremonies is taking place. Each woman present feels

that one of her sisters is taking the awful leap that, in the uncertainties it involves, is almost as solemn as death. Marriage is the point at which all feminine souls touch each other, the subject on which they feel alike, irrespective of class. What does it matter that Lady Clara Vere de Vere wears poul de soie and Brussels flounces, while Betsey Jones is clad in a fresh cotton gown and has large white satin bows on her bonnet? Neither can tell what may befall them, nor whether they will live to regret or to bless the lot they have accepted. Jones, if he gets drunk, may kick his wife to a great extent with impunity, which liberty society does not allow to the Earl of Daleshire; but that polite nobleman may divert himself in a manner as trying to Lady Clara's moral susceptibilities, though

she has no cause for physical terror. Even the shrivelled little pew-opener in the country church has some perception of this, and though she pockets the liberal half-crowns with pleasure on the greater occasion when the carriages sweep up from leafy avenues, yet she mutters her half tearful, "Eh, poor dear, I hope she'll be happy!" as earnestly as when she claps Betsey on the back and sees her walk off on Jones's arm through the lychgate.

Ellen Barton went through the service with composure. It often happens that the bride's loving faith gives her a calmness the bridegroom cannot attain to, for he has a lurking sense that his bachelor companions are regarding him as the more fortunate Reynards did the tail-

less fox. Moreover, he is not trained to be looked at as a woman is, and he is painfully conscious of his blue coat, of the brass buttons, of his feet and his hands. Altogether he is thankful when he leaves the church, and feels that his probation is over and his reign has begun.

Duncan Graham was still young and too romantic to know the latter sentiment as yet, but he was radiantly glad when he signed the register and felt that life now was a thing not for him alone, but for them—the two made one. Very handsome the pair looked as they passed down the aisle, and very sweet and modest was pretty Agnes as she followed with young Allan Graham.

The Rector, who had read the service with such inflections of voice as he con-

sidered suitably expressed his paternal emotion, glanced after this second couple, and thought he would take further counsel with himself on what he saw. Perhaps the only person who was thoroughly uncomfortable was Invermoy, who had never before seen what he called an English prelatical wedding. Accustomed to the quiet simplicity of the Scotch ceremonial, he hardly knew whether to be amused or irritated at what he heard, but as his thoughts flew back to a morning when he too had stood beside a white-robed bride, he thanked Providence that shy Jean had not had to listen to anything like this.

The recent death of Major Graham was a sufficient reason for avoiding a wedding breakfast, which no one wished for. Only

a few friends assembled to drink the health of the young couple, and then hung about, waiting while Ellen changed her dress upstairs. There was a farewell to be said besides, while the sisters were alone, and for a moment Ellen clung to Agnes, sobbing as she looked round the little white room they had always shared. Only for a moment, however ; with a quick movement of her head she checked her grief, and kissed her sister warmly.

“Don’t get frightened over the house-keeping now you’re to be alone, dear ; you mustn’t give way to people too much,” she said, smiling. “I shall be back in London, I hope, after we have paid this Scotch visit, and then you’ll come to me often. Good-bye, darling—good-bye !”

Another kiss and she was gone ; and

hurrying after her, Agnes saw, through tear-dimmed eyes, the farewells in the hall. Duncan following her into the carriage, they drove off, and she heard her father calling to her to come down directly. She had to compose herself and listen to the soft platitudes addressed to her by the departing guests, but only to two did she pay much heed. Invermoy took her hands and said kindly,

“My dear, we count kinship in Scotland more than you do, and I consider you almost related to me now. You’ll see what Ellen thinks of Scotland, but if she gives a good account of us perhaps you’ll come and see us. You will be heartily welcome.”

“Thank you, you are very kind to me. I should like it, if it were not so very far

off. Perhaps, however, I shall learn in time to be less frightened."

"No doubt you will, Duncan will teach you courage; you've had no brother to cure you of your fears, you see. I shall expect you some day. Now good-bye, my dear, you will be glad to be alone. Come, Allan."

Allan Graham had heard this dialogue, and was watching Agnes, as he often did in a dreamy sort of way, conscious that she was a pleasant object, something fair to be looked at, as he might look at a picture. She never seemed to have the flesh and blood brilliancy of the face that was constantly in his thoughts, and it did not occur to him that she would remark and dislike this mute observation. She did remark it, and it disturbed her at this

particular moment because she had to deliver a message in her new position as mistress of the house. Her father had found a moment to bid her ask young Graham to come back and see them, and now he was going, and she had not done it.

She blushed rosily as she shook hands with him.

"My father bid me say he hoped you would come to dinner some night, when you are disengaged."

"I am honoured," replied Allan, somewhat stiffly, "I scarcely ever go out."

"More's the pity," said Invermoy, interrupting him. "Bless me, when I was a youngster I wasn't so fond of my own society! He'll come, Agnes, I'll answer for him, only he's too shy to say yes all at once."

Under cover of this speech the adieux were got over, but the moment the cousins were outside the house, Allan began.

“What made you say that, Cousin Allan? I dislike the Rector, and I dislike the trouble of going out; why should you thrust it on me?”

“By my faith, sir, when a lady, and a pretty one too, asks you to her house, it behoves you to go, if you’ve any of the courtesy of a gentleman in you, let alone a Graham!” replied Invermoy, sharply. “It seems to me, Allan, that something is amiss with you. Now your father’s gone, I am your nearest relative, and I’ll not see my cousin’s son going to the devil without lifting a finger to save him. Come and have a chop with me, we’re close to the ‘Cock,’ and tell me what’s the matter.”

Allan was considerably startled by this sudden address, for he was quite unaware that his cousin had been observing his behaviour and drawing conclusions which determined him to bestow a friendly admonition on the lad before returning to the north.

The chops being ordered, Invermoy took his place at the end of a long and not over-clean table, where he would be out of earshot of waiters and guests, and bidding Allan seat himself opposite, questioned him shrewdly, yet kindly, as to his occupations and amusements. The latter, however, was no longer an ingenuous boy, sure to betray himself unintentionally ; he answered, when he could do so, with readiness, and when he could not, refused with quiet firmness.

“Laddie,” said Invermoy, stretching his hand across for a moment, “you’ll think I am interfering with what’s no business of mine, and perhaps you’re right; but my grey hairs should cover more experience than your brown. I was a daft callant once myself, and I’d fain save you from pitfalls that I know the look of. I’ll even tell you what I never breathed to mortal before. I nearly broke my own heart, and hurt another’s sorely, because of a fool’s promise that I made in my youth to a woman who had the face of an angel and the spirit of Satan. If you’re getting into trouble of that sort, get them to send you to India,—go away at any cost. I tell you, a soldier doesn’t need as much courage to go into battle as a man needs to fly from some temptations.”

Allan was both surprised at this revelation and touched at its motives, and said as much, stammeringly, as reserved people do when the ice over their hearts is only half broken.

“I’m in no such difficulty as you think though, cousin ; I’m bound by no promises, and there’s nothing to fear,” he added, with a glad confidence that made Invermoy regard him sadly.

“Well, well, I’ve done my best,” said he, with a sigh ; “each man must pluck his own grapes, and learn for himself how sour they are. I’ll away home in a couple of days or so, but remember, Allan, if you ever want help, you know where to come for it. Will your mother be ready to start with me, think you ?”

“Yes, she has packed up some of her

things already, and is longing to go. I'm not ungrateful, Cousin Allan, I assure you."

"Ay, ay, I'd rather you trusted me, but it can't be helped," said Invermoy, rising and calling the waiter, who pocketed the large fee he knew he might safely count on from "the country gentleman."

When the Laird determined to get to the bottom of a thing, he generally succeeded, and as he could obtain no information from Allan, he bethought himself that his old friend Dalgleish might know something of the lad's habits.

He therefore paid a second visit to Mackie's Club, and a casual question or two elicited all that Mr. Dalgleish knew of Mrs. Jutsom, which was, in fact, rather more than the truth.

Invermoy, prepared for some unpleasantness, was not likely to add the needful grain of salt to his friend's tale, and went to bed that night sorrowfully asking himself if his young cousin must be left to his folly, or if another effort could not be made to save him.

Meanwhile, Agnes and her father sat down to dinner at an unusually late hour on the day of the wedding, for there was still a sort of ground-swell of agitation in the household. It seems, in fact, the natural thing to be unpunctual when such an event as a marriage, or a death, takes place in a family. The Rector grumbled, but in vain, for, as the cook said, "It 'ud be a wonder when our young lady's just gone, and she looking as handsome as ever you saw, if I could just think of the mut-

ton and greens at the very minute, as if it were a common day !”

So, in honour of his elder daughter's marriage, Mr. Barton sat down meekly to an underdone joint and somewhat cold potatoes. Agnes, when she tasted them, felt that troubles were beginning quickly, and could have cried, had she not feared her father even more than she dreaded rebuking the cook.

The Rector, however, said nothing ; he was not an unkind man, and he pitied the timid girl, whose tremors made her so like her mother. Besides, his mind was full of a new idea, and he broached it—at least, in part.

“ Did you deliver my message to Allan Graham ?” he inquired.

“ Yes, father,” replied Agnes, blushing

again—it was provoking that she always did blush when that name was mentioned.

“And what did he say?”

“He said he never went out, but Invermoy took it up, and declared he was only shy, and would come.”

“Invermoy said that, did he? Save us! what a heathenish way that is of speaking of a man! You might as well call me Coventry Street or St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields.”

“Except that neither of these are yours, father, and Invermoy is Invermoy’s.”

“There it is again!” cried the Rector. “How the deuce is one to know if you mean a man, or an estate, or a village? One would think the Scotch wit is so dull that it cannot find names enough for the country, small as it is! Egad! I hope

Ellen mayn't find it savage beyond her expectations."

"I thought you used to be proud of our Scotch blood," said Agnes, who was fast becoming a partisan.

"Oh! it has its advantages. Your mother was connected with very good families on her mother's side, these Grahams among the number; but one would prefer one's connections to have reasonable names. But this young man—he is coming, you say?"

"I do not know when, father."

"Then write and ask him for Monday."

"That would be no use, for his mother leaves for Scotland next morning. How lonely it will be for him!"

"Oho! he told you that, did he?"

"No, I heard Invermoy mention it. Mrs. Graham travels with him."

"I see. Say Thursday, then. And, Agnes, you might go and see if you can be of any service to Mrs. Graham. She is a very weakly woman, I imagine."

"Very well, father, I will go to-morrow," said Agnes, and the Rector, watching her, felt more sure that his idea was a happy one. He was only partly right, but being well content with himself, he never questioned the correctness of any of his surmises or opinions. It was true that his daughter thought a good deal of Allan. In her heart she preferred him to his more popular cousin Duncan, though she did not breathe such a thought to her sister. To her, indeed, she had not spoken of Allan at all, feeling that new sadness—bitterness

it would have been in a more jealous nature—that comes with the first inroad on the treasure of sisterly love. Ellen might repeat her words to Duncan; it would be right that she should, thought meek Agnes, but because of this probability she must be silent, and endeavour, for the first time in her life, to be sufficient to herself.

She paid her visit next day, feeling a slight flutter as she did so, and dressing herself with care, although she could not but know that Mrs. Graham was almost certain to be alone. Alone she was, and Agnes's offers, though kindly received, were not accepted. Elspeth was beyond the reach of such a soft, ignorant young comforter as this; it was as if a lamb or a kitten had tried to make friends with her, and Agnes, who came to be helpful,

found herself receiving help and sympathy from the elder woman, who knew that the girl's home must seem empty to her to-day.

Something in her large, trustful eyes pleased Mrs. Graham, or perhaps, with one of her strange guesses, she read her visitor's heart, for when she rose to go she drew her near to her, and smoothing the soft brown hair, looked at her steadily for a moment.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said. "I am glad you came to-day. If I had had a daughter, I should like her to have had a face like yours. God bless you, child!"

Greatly moved, Agnes fled away home like a startled bird, but when she spoke of her visit in the evening, she did not mention these singular words.

The Lightning Coach started at an early hour for the north, and travellers had to make their preparations as soon as the sun rose. While Invermoy put together the few articles he carried with him, he felt that the last night of his stay in London had been well spent.

For the third time he had sought out Mr. Dalgleish, and had entreated him to assist in rescuing Allan from the influence of Mrs. Jutsom; the senior partner of the firm in which the boy was placed, a director of the great company, was well known to him, could he not therefore, without saying too much, persuade him to send Allan abroad, or at least out of London for a while?

"Not a doubt about it," said Dalgleish.
"It's quite an easy matter for them to

arrange, not perhaps all at once, but in the course of time. I'll speak about it, I promise you."

"And you won't explain too much, Dugald; one doesn't want the laddie's follies cried at the Cross."

"Of course not, of course not; you can trust me, Graham; I'll act as if for a relation of my own," replied the cheery old gentleman, though he inwardly wondered at the provincial ignorance which supposed that the pranks of one of their clerks would greatly interest the grave heads of the house of Trueman and Rich.

"And are you never coming north again?" asked Invermoy, "we might have many a chat over the High School if you'd visit us, and I should be able to show you the new pantiles I was mentioning."

"Thank you, Allan, I'm afraid I've been too long accustomed to London to move now; I'm like a clock, wound up once a week and sure to go straight on for eight days if let alone, but if I began travelling, I don't know what might happen. It would put me out of time, I fear. I'll come and see the old places before I die, though. There's a bit burnie at Pitmaldie where I'd like to go before I'm too stiff to climb a brae. It's a bonnie glen, and the memory of it keeps my old heart fresh. Eh, dear me! have another glass of punch, Graham. I'll see to Allan, and maybe have a look at the pantiles yet."

It was the remembrance of this conversation that comforted Invermoy as he prepared for his journey, and as soon as

he was ready he hurried off to take charge of his poor cousin.

Elsbeth had not closed her eyes, and had hardly even lain down during the night; her grief had returned with fresh poignancy as she prepared to leave the rooms made dear to her by their associations, and now that the parting with her son was at hand that pain also assumed new proportions. She felt that this was in all probability a final farewell, and anxieties for his future, that had hitherto troubled her but little, pressed upon her in the cold darkness of that long night.

When the windows began to glimmer in the yellowing light, she rose and paced the room with uncertain steps. Allan, who soon appeared, with great difficulty persuaded her to eat a scanty breakfast, but

when she had finished she set aside her cup, and called him to her. Kneeling down, he put his arms round her while she laid her trembling hands on his head.

“Allan, I fear me I have failed in my duty to you, though I never saw it till last night. Voices have spoken to me in the darkness, and I seemed to see clearer than ever before. I made to myself an idol, and the Lord took it out of my hands. If I have sinned, may the sin never be visited on your head, my son ! You have chosen another walk in life than the one we wished, and I know nothing of its ways. But I know this, that, soldier or merchant, you may be a man of your word, as your father was. No one had ever to seek for two meanings in aught that he said ; let it be so with you,

and the Lord bless you and keep you !”

“ Mother, mother ! Could you not have stayed with me ? I might do better for you than I have done hitherto. It is hard to let you go.”

“ Is it so ? I cannot tell, perhaps I am wrong to go away ; and yet no, we part without any bitterness of spirit now, Allan, and who knows, it might not be so if I remained to be a drag on your young life. No, I must away home, I couldn’t stay here,” said Elspeth, glancing nervously over her shoulder ; “ the room is full of ghosts, and I get frightened at times when I’m alone. I must go home.”

Allan was roused to self-command by this fresh evidence of his mother’s unsettled state of mind, yet he thought bitterly enough how slight a hold he had upon

her; even his cousin took a keener personal interest in him than she. He kissed her fondly, for at parting we are lenient with each other, and then proceeded to fasten up her luggage. The minutes sped rapidly; Invermoy was at the door, and the last embrace was over; with a lingering glance Elspeth left the room, but in the passage she stopped as though some thought had mastered her.

"Five minutes, give me just five minutes more," she said, pleadingly.

"We can spare that, we are in good time," replied Invermoy.

She hurried back with something like her old quickness of step, undoing her bonnet as she went; her son saw her fling it on to a table, and then the door swung back and hid the room. Presently he

heard a low moaning, and he and Invermoy hastily followed her.

She was kneeling in the dark arm-chair, her cheek pressed against the back, while her thin hands fondled it, and she murmured through her sobs inarticulate words of love and farewell. Completely overcome, her son leant against the door and looked appealingly at his cousin, who advanced and raised the weeping woman in his firm grasp.

"Elspeth, my dear, you must show yourself the brave woman Ian aye said you were. He never liked to see you give way to sorrow, and perhaps he is watching you now."

Elspeth could not reply, but she made an effort to control herself, put on her

bonnet, and left the room without a word.

Invermoy hoped that when she quitted these lodgings, with their sad and tender memories, she might recover herself somewhat, and at first it seemed as though his hopes were to be fulfilled.

She bore the journey well, and a faint interest flickered in her pallid face when they crossed the border, and she found herself again on Scottish soil.

At Invermoy, however, both the place and the people recalled the happy past too vividly, and after a few days' stay she begged her cousin to arrange for her journey northwards. When she reached Speyside her strength was far spent, and after a day or two of feverish excitement, she was taken ill, and confined for

many weeks to her room. When she left it her face wore a more peaceful expression, and her restlessness was gone, but gone also was much of the bright intelligence that had made her so delightful a companion. She was sweet and loveable still, ready to interest herself in small household cares, and especially tender to children, but her great delight was to sit among the fir-woods, where she could see the sunlight on red Craig Ellachie, and murmur to herself, as if it were the refrain of an old song, "He said stand fast till I come, and some day he will be here."

It was a touching sight to see her singing to herself, while she toyed with the wild flowers she had gathered, and her kin, as they saw her smiling to herself, thought it was well with her, better, perhaps, than

if her faithful heart had had to endure
for years the full consciousness of her
loss.

CHAPTER III.

MARRIED LIFE AND A PROMISE.

AT Invermoy the bride and bridegroom were looked for with anxiety. Jean Graham listened to all her husband said in Ellen's favour, acknowledged to herself that the thought of a daughter was sweet to her, if that daughter could be of the right sort, yet felt that she feared her coming. She was growing older, and more settled in her ways and ideas, and this young thing whom she was expected to welcome, had it in her power to make or mar her whole future happiness, for life

would be worth little if she and her laddie were to be less dear to each other than heretofore.

It was hard for her, and she felt it so, as she stood in the entrance hall, a trembling, hesitating figure, with the eager servants marshalled behind her, and outside a noisy crowd of labourers, tenants, and villagers, already beginning to cheer as the chaise-and-four whirled round the corner of the avenue under the elms, and came in sight of the house. Five minutes later Jean was aware of her husband's voice saying, "Here's our daughter, wife," of a tall girl, half startled at her vociferous reception, clinging to her so that she could not but respond, and then of a figure breaking from detaining hands, and the old merry voice exclaiming—though even

at that moment she remarked the difference in the accent—

“ Well, mother, how are you?—and where’s Cousin Mary?”

The meeting was certainly less terrible than she had feared, and such is usually the case.

The moments for which we have prepared ourselves beforehand are seldom like our expectations. It may be that the longed-for sweetness is sweeter, the dreaded pain less bitter, but whether worse or better than our imagination depicted them, they are themselves, and not what we dreamed, and we should have been wiser had we recollected that for each day its own joy, as well as its own sorrow, is sufficient.

Ellen Graham’s impressions were speedily

communicated to her sister, and set the Rector's speculations as to her Scotch relatives finally at rest. A week after her arrival, she wrote as follows :—

“ Invermoy House, Invermoy,
“ July 2nd, 1814.

“ MY DEAREST AGNES,

“ I wish I could express in fitting words all that I have thought and felt since coming here, but I have not sufficient talent to do so. I might sum it all up by saying there never was a happier woman than I, but you will want to know more than that. I have been making fresh acquaintances every day ; twice some of the neighbours have come in great family coaches to see me, and next week we are to pay visits ourselves. Most of my new friends are in another rank. In-

vermoy has driven us out to the distant farms to see the tenants, and I have gone with Duncan to call on numbers of people in the village and on the estate. I am trying to learn Scotch ; do not be shocked at me—it seems so ungracious to be unable to reply to or even understand the kindly greetings showered on me. But I can shake hands and give sweets to the children, and I hope I am satisfying Duncan's old friends.

“One visit was very amusing. We went to the baker's shop, where everyone meets to gossip, and Mrs. Macrae insisted on our drinking tea—there is no saloop here, you know. She was such a delightful figure in her curious dress and big cap, and was very friendly ; but a Dame Elspeth Morrison came in, who quite

frightened me. Her son is a sergeant in the — Highlanders, the late Major Graham's regiment, and her grandson drives a small cart here. Mrs. Morrison spoke so solemnly to me, holding my hands and staring at me with hollow eyes, that I felt very uncomfortable. Duncan explained what she said ; it was all about the pride of youth bringing sorrow, and the Lord being good only to the humble. Duncan says she is not mad, but I think she must be.

“My mother-in-law and I continue to be on the pleasantest terms. I think she is pleased at my liking to visit the cottages. As for Cousin Mary, she is charming. She has one grey satin gown, made years ago, of satin such as I never saw before, and her lace is far finer than what our

friend Bessie Parkins used to boast of. She consulted me about altering her dress, but I would not hear of it. I am to trim her bonnet afresh, however. She is, as I said, a delightful old lady. I even forgive her for liking her nephew Allan, that stiff youth, better than my dear husband. But I must conclude, for Invermoy desires us to be punctual at dinner, and it is near the hour for the great bell to be rung. Give my dutiful respects to my father, and believe me to remain, my sweet sister,

“ Your affectionate

“ ELLEN GRAHAM.

“ P.S.—There is one person I do not like, a young man named James Dewar, who seems far more familiar with Cousin Mary than his rank warrants. He is something between a clerk and a com-

mercial person. I thought him conceited, and not well informed. I must tell you, too, something that will make you laugh, you who used to think me so brave. The silence here seems so extraordinary I cannot get accustomed to it. I should not like to be alone at night in this large house, for I miss the sounds in the street and the watchmen going round. When I am out I listen to the crows cawing as attentively as though they were addressing themselves to me."

Silence or sound will become agreeable to a woman whose heart is at ease, and very soon Ellen learnt to love the sweet quiet, and her ear became quick to catch the delicate undertones that fill the country air with pleasant harmonies. Her viva-

cious nature enabled her to throw herself into her new life, and she found endless interest and occupation among the dwellings on the estate. She was welcome in all of them, from the "but and ben," in which old Elspeth got slowly through her day's work, to the farm-house, where at the first glimpse of the Laird's carriage the table in the parlour was spread with piled oatcakes, creamy milk, scones, butter and cheese, the whole flanked with a tall bottle of whisky.

A man's mind is not easily turned to a new mode of life, and while Ellen was growing fond of her Scottish home, her husband was becoming weary of it. As long as there were improvements to look at, or some bit of prosperous work to see, while visitors were still numerous and he

had visits to pay—he found his life tolerable enough, but the gala days that followed on his arrival could not last for ever, and unhappily the estate was not at all in a prosperous condition. Invermoy avoided disagreeable topics at first, being unwilling to mar the boy's happiest days, but he knew that his son could not enjoy a perpetual holiday, and he longed to claim his sympathy, and even ask his advice, on many matters that troubled him.

He very soon saw that Duncan was no farmer, he had none of the patience that labours steadily through dreary seasons as well as fine ones, nor did he care to study subjects of which he was entirely ignorant, save for the smattering of knowledge he had picked up as a boy when he trotted after his father through the fields.

It was a bitter pang to the old Laird when he found that the heir to his cherished acres cared more for a jovial mess dinner than for the best gathering the neighbourhood could produce, and his brave old heart sank when he discovered also that Duncan thought McHaffie and Spait were the proper people to settle all business connected with the estate. As for the draining and that sort of thing, Bain the grieve should see to it; what was the use of having a good grieve if he couldn't take these affairs off the Laird's shoulders?

And this then was the end of Invermoy's hopes and schemes; now that he was growing old and could scarcely keep pace with modern ways, now that he needed a strong young shoulder to lean on and the

help of brave young eyes to see and conquer his difficulties, now that his handsome boy had brought home a wife after his own heart, and that a happy life seemed possible for the whole family, now, behold the longed-for son cared for none of these things, and the one air-castle of his age crumbled as a certain golden edifice had crumbled long ago in the hey-day of his youth.

The Laird felt his disappointment even more keenly than his wife had felt the coming of the English bride, for that affected only Jean's personal condition, whereas this concerned the welfare of many.

Would Duncan care to ask by-and-by where his labourers came from, and give the preference to "ken't names," would he

let Allister Cameron stay on in the Langhill Farm for the sake of the two generations that had been there before him, or would he turn the poor fellow out because his wits were none of the brightest and his farming certainly very bad? And would he watch over the trees with the same jealous care as his father, or in the coming years would the grand beeches and oaks fall to pay for some fancy of their owner's?

These were sad thoughts for Invermoy to digest as he walked wearily through the home farm and thought of a day when he strode easily through the newly-turned soil, and had to turn back to help his laughing boy across the stiff furrows. Now he chose the smoother edges and moved but slowly, so that Bain, looking to

see if the corn were ready for the sickle, thought the Laird "unco aged, and no sae soople as he was a while back."

"I was at the Haugh two days ago, Bain," said Invermoy, stopping and examining the grain beside him.

"Ay, sir," said the grieve; "it's a lang road yon, I didna think ye were gangin' sae far."

"I drove Mrs. Duncan to see it; those drains are not working well—the half-acre field's as wet as ever."

"Weel, sir, I was aye for lettin' it be; it's rashy land and——"

"Tut, tut, man, what's the use of telling me that over and over again. I tell you draining as it's carried out now is bound to pay, and it shall pay. I'll have that field good grass if I drain it ten times over!"

cried Invermoy, striking his stick on the ground and walking away.

Bain was a fool in some ways, and his folly was too much at that moment for the Laird's placidity; he did not like his grieve, but he was loth to change; he might go farther and fare worse. If Duncan now had understood draining, and could have gone to the Haugh to see what was amiss! It was a long way off; in fact, an isolated farm like that was a mistake, it should be sold but for the entail; still it was nothing of a day's work for a young man. Drains must pay, didn't Sinclair say so, and hadn't he himself turned a low-lying field by the Moy into excellent pasture, though it wasn't worth a shilling an acre before? then why, in heaven's name, didn't it pay at the

Haugh? Why indeed, honest Allan! Because with all your shrewdness you are a simple soul, and would not dream of looking for a rogue among the folk at your doors to whom you feel so kindly. *You* saw the field drained by the river, not a trench was dug nor a dozen pantiles laid without the master's eye seeing them, and so you succeeded, as you deserve to do. But over at the Haugh, you were taking one of your rare holidays, paying a visit or two when that field was drained, and rogue Bain is richer by the price of half the pantiles that you fancy are securely bedded below that "rashy" soil. Bear your troubles bravely, Allan Graham, for the load is not growing lighter, and courage alone can make it easier to carry.

July and August had slipped away, the

horse-chestnuts were reddening with the earliest crimson of autumn, the purple shadows lengthened behind the sheaves in the warm evenings, and a quiet content filled the hearts of "the three leddies Graham," as the people fondly called them.

Sometimes Miss Mary would walk up from the village to a certain ash on whose gnarled and bossy trunk she and her brother and cousin had rested after many a childish game.

Thither Ellen Graham would bring her mother-in-law, and the trio would sit together, looking across glade and trees, past the grey tower of the cathedral to the soft blue moor and hill. The cathedral was Ellen's delight, she loved the mossy walls and slender shafts, and was never weary of listening to Miss Mary's tales of

the combats that were fought and the brave men who perished within hearing of "the skelloche bell."

To the sound of that very bell, now four hundred years old, she listened when the autumn market was opened in the village, for it was then solemnly rung by the parish crier, who looked, in his long brown coat, red handkerchief, and ancient cocked hat, as though he too belonged to a bygone age.

Jean's heart softened towards her daughter-in-law during these quiet talks, for the girl was so kindly, and, above all, so devoted to her husband, that the mother could not but love her. There were other meetings too, when mysteries of attire were discussed, and the last chat from London quoted out of letters that seemed

to Agnes to tell of a dull life when she wrote them, yet to these tranquil readers breathed of more stirring life than theirs. At first Jean thought nothing would induce her to ask advice from Ellen respecting her wardrobe, but Miss Mary had no such pride, and after listening to animated arguments on the merits of brown merino and the proper set of a ruffle she was at last obliged to join, and ended by accepting Ellen's pretty hints as to her gowns and laces. Often, too, Ellen would visit the Cottage, and had already adorned the little sitting-room with some pieces of elaborate knitting, besides persuading Miss Mary to let her re-cover two of the chairs with a flowery chintz.

One afternoon, when she was busily fitting a cover, James Dewar was an-

nounced, and she was surprised to see a shade of embarrassment on Miss Mary's faded face as she received him. She continued her work, but listened with interest to the conversation, vainly endeavouring to guess at the nature of the understanding that existed between the two.

She discovered nothing, however, and Miss Mary need not have been anxious, Dewar was too shrewd to commit her; he only asserted himself somewhat more because of the presence of the English Mrs. Graham, whom he thought both proud and unfriendly.

"I've been to St. Magus, as I told you, Miss Mary," said he. "Ye mind o' those French folk we saw here?"

"Yes, poor creatures! Are they not out of the gaol yet?"

“Some are gone, and I saw more starting, and, faith, I think they’ve thriven well on Scotch bannocks. They’re no sae disjaskit-looking as yon day when ye gi’ed them the milk from your tea, Miss Mary.”

“They’re all to be set free, I suppose?”

“Oh! yes, but there wasna accommodation for the whole of them to travel, so they drew lots to settle who was to go and who was to bide. They’re clever with their fingers, there’s no denyin’, and I brought you a trifle or two of their making. They’re not costly, but I thought, maybe, you’d like them.”

So saying, Dewar produced from his pocket a bag containing a tiny set of dominoes, and a box, in which was a house,

fancifully constructed of straws and bits of cork.

“Very pretty, James, and ingenious,” said Miss Mary, examining them. “But what are these bits of bone for? I never saw the like till now.”

“Oh! those are dominoes, Cousin Mary,” said Ellen, coming forward. “Duncan brought some home with him, and taught me how to play. Where do the prisoners get them?”

“They make them, Mistress Duncan,” replied Dewar. “They cut them out of the bones of the meat they get, and a regular trade it is for them. They hardly know a word of English, but they come to the railings and cry out, ‘Buy dis, buy dat, plees,’ and there’s few folk can pass them

by. Most houses thereabouts have a bit box on the chimneypiece, with some sort of fancy in it of their making."

"I am much obliged to you, James, for bringing me these. It is a mercy the wars are over, so that these poor creatures may get back to their own homes," said Miss Mary.

"Ay, no doubt, but, Miss Mary, I mentioned to you that I was going to see Tod o' the Candleriggs, and I just stepped in now to tell you that I went on a fule's errand, though it wasna of my ain making. Mr. Bain was in St. Magus for the market, and when he came back he brought some idle clash that Tod's business wasna just as good as it had been, so I went up to see for myself. I had ado enough to get away, for there's a deal of writing in the office at

the present moment, and Mr. Spait thinks nobody should work except for him, but Mr. McHaffie spoke up for me, and got me the day's leave."

"And I hope you found everything right," said Miss Mary, who dared not express before Ellen the fears that had seized her lest her cherished hoard should not be safe.

"Oh, yes; Bain's got a tongue that's longer than his sense," replied Dewar, contemptuously. "Mr. Tod and I had a grand conversation, and he let me into a good deal of his business; it stands to reason that I know more about it than Bain. I wouldna have mentioned it, only I knew your kind interest in my work, and I thought you might hear some auld wife's clack about it. But

I'll wish you good day now, Miss Mary."

"What a singular young man that is, Cousin Mary!" said Ellen, when James had rather abruptly left the room. "Does he always expect one to shake hands with him? He looks offended if one doesn't do so."

"It is more our Scottish fashion than it is with you, I fancy, my dear; he is a worthy lad, and I wish him well, though he is somewhat more positive in his way of speech than he used to be. But, my dear, let me see how your work is getting on."

Clearly Miss Mary did not intend to discuss her *protégé*, and Ellen's curiosity had to remain ungratified. She asked no further questions, but displayed her work, and in looking at it her old friend forgot

for the time the uneasiness Dewar's visit had caused her.

This calm life was disturbed early in September by a letter offering Duncan the post of Adjutant in his regiment, which he accepted with a delight that smote Invermoy's heart, and made his mother complain querulously that he did not seem to care for his home or kin. The young man replied good-humouredly, soothing her as one soothes a child, while to his father he pointed out what Invermoy already knew only too well, that the habits of the last few years had unfitted him for a quiet country home.

"I was born a soldier, father," he added, with a touch of affectation.

"You were born a country Laird's son, and should have grown up to fill your

father's shoes. You young folk think you've the settling of your own lives ; in my day a lad had to take the place his father put him in. I daresay you're a good enough soldier ; it would be odd if you were not, considering the blood in your veins, but I did look to see you fancy your work here at least as well as you like the regiment."

"I didn't make myself, sir," said Duncan, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Didn't make yourself ! What's a man good for if he can't teach himself to do any work that comes in his way ? You've taught yourself a good deal—that confounded foreign trick with your shoulders, for instance ; you didn't get that from me, nor your mother either. But there, one can't help oneself. Please yourself, and if

the place goes to the devil, I shan't be here to see it, that's some comfort," cried Invermoy, hastily.

Duncan had never before heard his father speak so angrily, but he was more surprised than grieved. The same blunder repeats itself in each generation. Fathers and mothers plan out their children's lives and feed themselves with hopes and expectations till they are almost persuaded that they have a right to look for their fulfilment. Meanwhile the children, who cannot choose their surroundings, who suffer in body and soul for the sins of their forefathers, grow up, their aspirations differing in kind though not in strength, and with the impatience of youth superadded. Then, where there should have been mutual help and tolerance, come

irritation and division, and the devil—we must use the ancient word till some modern definitional genius replaces it with a scientific one—the devil rejoices with a bitter joy. There might well be a jubilee among the dark angels at this juncture over the fortunes of the Grahams, for the old generation was passing away, and it seemed doubtful if the new would replace it worthily.

Duncan and his wife went to London, and settled, for economy's sake, in a quiet little street between the Strand and the Thames, not far from Mr. Barton's house. Here Agnes came often, full of questionings and confidences; here she admired and resolved to emulate her sister's energy in ruling the house; and here also she began to see something of a wider society,

and gain a little of the *aplomb* that distinguishes a pretty woman from a pretty schoolgirl.

A certain amount of society soon gathered round the Adjutant and his handsome wife, and as the circle was almost exclusively military it was sufficiently unlike that to which Agnes had been accustomed. One or two of the most frequent guests only needed a little encouragement to make them develop their evident admiration for her into something stronger; but she never gave it. Her pretty friendliness froze into reserve at any hint of love-making, and to her sister's sage advice she replied lightly that she did not want to marry, and cared for none of the gentlemen who pressed their attentions on her.

Perhaps a certain grave face with brown eyes that dwelt in her recollection would have attracted her more than any of these fashionable dandies of the Guards. Allan Graham, however, scarcely visited his cousin's house, nor did Duncan greatly press him to do so.

"If he isn't anxious to come, well, he may stay away; a man who prefers the sort of society he goes into to yours isn't worth asking. I am sorry for it, for his father was a fine old fellow, and a capital soldier. It is a pity Allan doesn't take after him," said Duncan, crossing the room to examine some work that Agnes was taking out of a large frame, and wondering what had so flushed her cheeks as she bent over it.

"That is a great affair, Agnes, and will

look very well on yonder bare wall. It must have taken you a long while to do."

"No, it was begun the day after your marriage. I thought I should have finished it before you came to town, but you arrived too soon for me."

"It really is very fine, Duncan," added Ellen, lest her husband in his masculine ignorance should under-rate the tapestry. "Agnes is one of Miss Linley's best pupils."

"And who is Miss Linley?"

"Bless me!" exclaimed the ladies, "how is it you have never seen her Exhibition? we must take you there this very day. She learnt this work from a Leicestershire lady, who invented it, but did not care to work herself. Shall we go now?"

"By all means, do not be hours dressing," said Duncan, smiling.

Very shortly, for the sisters spent little time over their toilettes, the trio entered Leicester Square.

Passing up a broad flight of steps flanked with statues, they entered a hall, on one side of which were the show-rooms of a carpet manufactory, and on the other a long gallery in which the new tapestry was exhibited. It was an agreeable lounge, and on a showery day was pretty well filled. At the farther end, in front of a mirror, was a kind of throne, under a canopy of blue satin and silver. This erection was placed there on a great occasion when royal personages had visited the gallery, and remained as an evidence of the visit and of Miss Linley's loyalty.

On the right hand side were the windows and fireplace. The former were draped with scarlet cloth bordered with Greek designs in gold and fastened with gold tassels, and were filled, moreover, with comfortable settees to match. On the opposite wall, protected by a slight hand-rail, were the pictures in needlework, curious products of patient skill. Several Morlands, a Potter or two, even a Romney, as faithfully copied as the materials would permit, were hung on the line, while multitudes of lesser performances, wonderful birds and flowers, arabesques, and large-headed Cupids handling impossible bows were disposed elsewhere on the walls.

When the Grahams entered, there were not a dozen people in the room. A noisy party was just leaving it, an old gentle-

man with spectacles was systematically examining the pictures, and one couple stood before the mirror, the lady apparently studying her own figure.

“There is Mr. Graham!” exclaimed Agnes, as her eye fell on this pair.

“So it is, who on earth has he got with him,” said Duncan, scrutinizing the lady.

“A curious-looking person,” replied Ellen, noting with feminine quickness a trifle too much colour on the dress, a feather too prominent on the bonnet that, to the eye of a lady, spoilt Mrs. Jutson’s appearance.

Just then Allan turned and recognised his cousin, and nodding hastily to him, crossed over to one of the windows and remained there conversing with his companion till Duncan and the ladies had

passed up the room, when he and Mrs. Jutsom quitted it.

“How very strange!” remarked Ellen, as she saw him go.

“Not at all. I see now that the person with him is the actress I told you of. He could hardly join us,” replied Duncan, contemptuously, for he was disposed to be harsh towards a folly he had never committed.

Ellen, as usual, shared his opinion, being very indifferent to Allan, but for Agnes the charm of the Exhibition was gone. The Cupids appeared distorted, the elaborate skies tame and formal, the flowers dull of hue. What a beautiful face that woman had, and how she looked up at Mr. Graham; she had even laid her hand on his arm while speaking earnestly.

Agnes had observed it all (as Mrs. Jutsom was well aware, when she permitted herself that little gesture), and she felt that crushing sense of inferiority that oppresses a woman when she acknowledges the power of the beauty that is preferred to her own.

Allan was more and more captivated by Mrs. Jutsom, for she was in trouble, and allowed him to advise and sympathise with her. Her husband's love of play was growing more intense, and high words had passed between him and his wife on the subject of his losses. Mrs. Jutsom had even gone so far as to declare that she would abandon the stage if he demanded more than the small sums she had hitherto allowed him. She very justly remarked that she was not going to toil in order that he might spend, and when taunted with

her love of money, retorted that to lay it by against a rainy day was at least a wise weakness.

Jutsom knew well enough that she was quite capable of executing her threat, and that if he wished to keep a roof over his head without any labour, he had better remain on good terms with his wife. On one occasion he attempted to obtain from a manager the sum due to her, asserting his right to receive it, but he had not concealed his intention carefully enough, and Fanny herself interrupted the colloquy, and declared she would throw up her engagement, and pay a forfeit, if the money was not given into her own hands. Once there it was safe enough, for neither by threats nor cajoleries could she ever be induced to confess how she disposed of it;

she would only say that it was in safe keeping, out of Jutsom's reach. There could hardly be peace between husband and wife under such circumstances, and each quarrel loosened the ties that bound them to each other. Jutsom began to spend less and less time at home. From gambling to drinking was an easy step, and soon he drank hard, so that Fanny, who felt herself the stronger on other occasions, was terrified at the violence of which his weaker nature was capable when so inflamed.

How Allan pitied and believed in her may be imagined, nor did he suspect that she, who complained of her husband's extortions, was in reality hoarding a goodly sum, of which a meagre portion was unwillingly doled out to him. Happily for

him, Mr. Dalgleish had not forgotten his promise to Invermoy, and by some persuasion induced Messrs. Trueman and Rich not only to send Allan abroad, but to entrust him with the conduct of certain affairs, on the understanding that, if he managed them successfully, his position in the house should be materially improved. More fortunately still, Dalgleish himself made Allan aware of the intended change, and so saved him from acting on his first mad impulse to refuse the proffered post.

Had the offer come direct from the heads of the firm, there would have been a possibility of declining it, but he could scarcely venture to place his old friend in the ludicrous position of having uselessly asked a great favour. Dalgleish saw his

hesitation, and guessing its cause, adroitly turned it to account.

“Of course, Graham, I can imagine your hesitating on the score of your inexperience, but you have a long Scotch head on your shoulders, and I'm sure you will not make me regret that I have been able to obtain this position for you. You have the ball at your foot now, and I hope, for your own sake, as well as for my old friend Invermoy's, that you will be a successful merchant.”

After this there was nothing to be said, and as Messrs. Trueman and Rich summoned Allan to their private room before he had a chance of seeing Mrs. Jutsom, the whole affair was definitely arranged, and her complaints and entreaties rendered powerless.

Perceiving this, she was too shrewd to spend much time in regretting what could not be helped, but determined in the brief period left her to establish her power so as to be able to depend on Allan's assistance in the future. Why she was so anxious not to lose sight of him, she could hardly have defined to herself, since his fortunes were uncertain, and she would have laughed at the notion that she was actuated by any motive but self-interest.

Whatever shades of unreason prompted her, the result was the complete subjugation of her victim, and when his last evening in Somers Street was over, he went home fully convinced that no more beautiful or fascinating woman existed than she; nor did his mind misgive him as he remembered how he had replied to her

cunning question—"If I were free, would you really marry me, in spite of all your relations would say?"

He was almost ready to go on board the vessel that was to take him to Calcutta, when a letter was put into his hands, a farewell, couched in such terms as Fanny had never yet used to him. She declared that she had regained her self-respect since he had said that he would make her his wife if she were free, and further, that, now that he was going, she did not know how to bear the thought of her solitude, and the increasing disgrace of her husband's conduct. Would he accede to a fancy she knew to be foolish, and repeat his words of last night, that she might have some solace to turn to when he was gone?

Allan hastily penned a reply, he hardly knew what, for his thoughts poured themselves out in a torrent of passionate phrases. As he was sealing the letter an unbidden recollection crossed him, of his cousin's kindly warning, and he paused, with the wax in his hand. Was he doing a foolish thing? Not he, said unreason, silencing conscience; Fanny was not such a woman as Invermoy had described, and he would not be so churlish as to refuse her anything she asked at this last moment.

The wax was dropped, and he pressed it with his father's seal, a sorry use for the noble motto, "I hauld faith."

In a few hours Allan, on board the *Jason*, was looking with a full heart at the silvery strip of water widening between

him and the quay, and Fanny Jutson, having dried an unexpected tear or two, was proceeding with a very satisfied air to lock away in a secret drawer a letter she had read twice carefully.

Chance had been unkind to Agnes Barton, for she had stopped to make a trivial purchase on her way to her sisters' when Allan called to say farewell to his cousins. It is true he had dined with them two nights previously, and had been less taciturn than usual, for even the most love-infatuated youth could not but feel some excitement on the eve of what was in those days a serious undertaking.

On that last morning, however, Agnes, as we have said, had not arrived; she was, in fact, consulting her maid about the shade of a ribbon when, had she known

who was occupying her usual place near Ellen's work-table, she would have been hurrying on as fast as her feet could carry her. She had almost reached her sister's door when Allan came out from it, and Mistress Hobbs, who was attending her, saw the little start her young mistress could not quite suppress. Another servant was at the open door, and standing between those four watchful eyes poor Agnes had to shake hands with Allan and wish him good speed. It was to her credit that she passed into the house without once looking back as he walked away.

She got through the winter bravely, not making any outward difference in her life, and if she was at times a little impatient, or lacked interest in the routs to which her sister chaperoned her, that wise young

matron either took no notice, or ascribed her condition to a cold, the bad weather, or some other of the hundred and one externals that are made the scapegoats of our own unhappy tempers or secret pains.

CHAPTER IV.

WATERLOO AND PARIS.

DURING that peaceful winter plans were maturing on a little island in the Mediterranean, that in spring startled Europe, and made the petty interests of each household less absorbing because of the wider hopes and fears outside.

Every day brought fresh rumours and proposals, and now that Napoleon was in France—in Paris—when Beranger's songs were ringing in the streets, and the French veterans were crowding to their restored eagles, statesmen sank their minor differ-

ences and joined in one cause, and soldiers in London were sure of sympathy when they reminded their friends that six months ago the Duke had foretold this catastrophe and proposed measures to which an over-confident Government refused to listen. Now the cry was for men and money ; who would listen to Whitbread praying for peace when the nation was eager for war ?

British troops were ready ere the end of March, and foremost among them was the — battalion of Guards. It was after parade, when a knot of officers were discussing the last assembly at Almack's, that the Colonel rode quickly up to them, exclaiming, " Napoleon is in France, gentlemen, there will be work for us soon !"

From that morning till the regiment

sailed for Holland the excitement deepened. Duncan Graham was full of eager anticipations, for he had been fortunate so far, and now might have a chance of earning distinction. Agnes listened as she had done before to these sentiments, and while marvelling at them reflected that a profession which sent a man to India was better than one that forced him to fight.

She would have condoled with her sister, but Ellen, whatever her secret fears may have been, neither showed them nor craved pity.

The Rector once suggested that she should remain with him during her husband's absence, but she treated the proposal as a manifest impossibility, and set herself bravely to the dismantling of her little home.

Early in April behold her then in Brussels, where no doubt she met one or other of the personages whom an unmatched story has made familiar to us all. Very likely she went to that most historical of balls given by the Duchess of Richmond, and we may be sure she knew at what hour her husband intended to slip away unobserved, according to the Duke's orders. Perhaps she aided him by professing to have a headache and begging him to take her home, and her pale cheeks must have confirmed her words.

There in the early morning, while Amelia Osborne is helplessly fingering her husband's sash and impeding the packing, while the unruffled Becky is secretly reckoning her resources in case poor faithful Rawdon should be killed, Ellen also

endured her trial, and came through it staunchly, not faltering till she had seen her adjutant mount and ride away in the growing light.

Then came the guns of Quatre Bras, and the scenes we know so well, the wounded in the jolting carts, the stout-hearted soldiers' wives, helpful and tender, thanking God, some of them, that as yet it was not their own kin they were called upon to nurse, rumours following each other with distracting speed after Rulle's runaway Hussars had galloped into the town, and, lastly, braided Isidore bargaining, while fat Jos. Sedley shouted, in another temper than Richard's, "My kingdom for a horse!"

Yet another day of anxious expectation, and then the drama closes with the great-

est scene of all, transformation scene this, with Europe for audience, Waterloo for stage, and kings, generals, and armies for actors.

From the first there was a noticeable difference in the behaviour of the two armies, the French veterans deploying with music and drums, the clang of trumpets, and defiant fanfaronnade; the English stealing quietly to their ground behind the low ridge, as though they knew that the endurance of their young soldiers, and the trustiness of their mixed auxiliaries would be sorely tried.

It was indeed

“ A day of onsets of despair,”

of varying fortunes ; here a Belgian line flying, and the assailants driven back in their turn by a handful of Peninsular heroes ;

there a splendid charge carried too far, and the wreck of the brigade returning, leaving two leaders on the field; everywhere personal daring and devotion that fired all ranks alike.

Afternoon at last, the air heavy with stinging smoke, the Guards reduced to a skeleton regiment, and still the struggle continues. How long can flesh and blood stand it, think the officers, looking anxiously towards their left, though they could not see through those rolling clouds, even had the expected Prussians been close at hand.

They are coming up, as the French perceive, for round shot begin to bound across the Charleroi road, and Planchenoit is in their hands.

It is time for a supreme effort, ere the

knowledge that their allies are near put fresh vigour into those undaunted British troops.

Forward with the Garde Impériale, and let the English Guards face their attack if they can, for they are but a line against two columns of fresh men. Forward, too, comes a cloud of skirmishers, but the Duke rides up on the ridge, and gives the order, "Drive those fellows off!" It is promptly obeyed, yet still the heavy masses of Frenchmen press on. Adams's guns roar continuously, the Guards' fire is close and deadly, and not a man will flinch; but the odds are terrible, for d'Erlon and Reille are marching to support the main columns of the enemy, and the whole of the British force is engaged.

But now Seaton, with the 52nd, sees his

opportunity, and acts decisively. His regiment is comparatively fresh and has plenty of ammunition. He advances and wheels, the men stepping short on the left till their line faces the long flank of the French column. The movement is completed as accurately as at a review, and now all the valour of Napoleon's Old Guard cannot avert defeat. They try to deploy, but fail, for Maitland is in front of them, and this fresh flank attack was unlooked for; they halt an instant, then break—Wellington sees that at last he may let loose his leashed troops, he gives the word, and

“Down we swept, and charged and overthrew.”

It is a moment of complete exultation, losses are not reckoned while the foe is flying fast—the victors follow, rewarded

now for their long endurance, their patient courage, for even in the midst of this hot pursuit they feel that they have eclipsed their former glories.

So thinks Duncan Graham as he rides by his eager men in a glow of pride and triumph. Alas! a few dropping shots are fired by some Frenchmen ere they too turn and fly, and down goes the good charger, down, too, goes the rider with a bullet in his knee, and his sword arm crushed in his fall. The regiment sweeps on, Duncan endures a moment or two of agony, then the sounds appear to pass away from him, and he is unconscious.

He fortunately escaped the hands of the plunderers who made that night of pain more horrible by their barbarities, and in the grey of the morning was carried to one

of the houses prepared before the engagement for the wounded. Ellen Graham, with another lady bent on a similar errand, made her way thither as soon as she could procure a conveyance, and proved herself a courageous and tender nurse, finding leisure to assist many worse sufferers than her husband. The doctors thanked and the patients blessed her, and if she was at times overpowered by some fresh horror, she knew how to control herself till she could obtain the few minutes' rest and air needed to restore her. Duncan soon recovered sufficiently to be moved, and followed the troops to Paris, though unable to use his arm.

Great were the lamentations of the worthy Flemings at the departure of their allies, and a special measure of friendship

was bestowed on "*les petits Ecossais*," though the diminutive was hardly appropriate to the tall warriors, who might be seen playing with the children or taking a turn at the garden of many a Flemish home.

The Highlanders were differently estimated in Paris, where they were regarded with wonder and dislike, and spoken of, at a safe distance, as "*les sauvages Américains*."

Paris at that time contained a wonderful medley of nationalities. In a large corner house not far from the Champs Elysées lived the Duke of Wellington, and from his *salon* there issued orderlies and staff officers, going about their business with a matter-of-fact calmness somewhat annoying to excitable street loungers full of a touchy love for the "*terre sacrée de la France*."

In the Champs Elysées themselves twinkled the lights of the English camp, and when the evening crowds began to gather round Café Chantant or Vaudeville, the songs were interrupted by the sonorous roll of the English "point of war." The national airs of half-a-dozen countries were played daily in the streets, and the very proclamations that secured protection to postal and other authorities were written in various tongues and signed by several Generals.

The strangers themselves found their stay remarkably pleasant. Paris was unknown ground to almost all of them, and they enjoyed her brilliancy to the full. The English immediately got up a four-in-hand club, and as the inhabitants watched the unruly teams, or saw men in strangely

tight nether garments riding madly at fences and hedges of fearful construction, they became more than ever convinced that a species of insanity unknown in France possessed these large-limbed islanders. It was the first introduction of the Parisians to that noble cult afterwards called "Le Sport."

Ellen Graham was never weary of gazing at the gay shops, the novel open-air life about her, nor did her husband find it less agreeable.

One day they were walking together, not far from the camp, where the white-capped *bonnes* and their young charges mustered in great numbers to see the war-like array.

Suddenly a little boy broke from his nurse, and shouting, "C'est lui, c'est lui,

enfin je l'ai trouvé !" rushed up to Duncan, and clung to him with exclamations of delight.

"Bless my soul, here's little 'Tonio ! How you've grown, little man ! I say, take care of my arm—I can't lift you up as I used to do."

"Ah, quel malheur, vous êtes blessé ! How it is sad ; I forget not your English, monsieur," said the boy, smiling.

"That's right. You've heard of Madame d'Arblanc, Ellen," said Duncan—"this is her son."

"Indeed ! He seems to be very fond of you," said Ellen, who had been looking on in great surprise.

"How is your mother, 'Tonio ?" inquired Graham.

"My mother?—ah, she is very well.

Do you not want to see Concha? She would like to see you. You must come home with me; it is the hour of the *collation*. Come quick—quick!”

“But you had better tell Madame d’Arblanc first, and I will come another day. And this is my wife, ’Tonio.”

The *bonne*, who was not Concha, now advanced, and curtseying, informed Duncan that ’Tonio had been looking for him every day; that Madame desired her, in case of their meeting him, to beg him to come to their *hôtel* at once, and Madame also, added the Frenchwoman, with native tact. There appeared to be no reason for refusing, though Duncan was by no means sure that he responded to Madame d’Arblanc’s wish; but his wife settled the matter.

“Do go, Duncan, I should like of all things to see a French house, and these people in particular.”

Away they accordingly went, Antonio holding his friend's hand and chattering volubly, while every now and then some idea seemed to recur to him that threw him into fresh ecstasies.

Arriving at the house, they passed through the large gates and covered entrance, and thence up to a *salon*, where the well-kept *parquet* made progress extremely difficult. 'Tonio, who scamp-ered along as though unconscious of its slipperiness, begged them to wait while he fetched his mother.

They had scarcely time to look round the room, to observe the mirrors between which hung a picture covered with a green

silk curtain, the ornamented tables, and tiny squares of carpet in front of the chairs, when steps were heard, and the boy crying, "La voilà! la belle petite mère!" led in, not the Madame d'Arblanc that Duncan expected, but Concha herself, in a bewitching white dress with blue bows upon it, and a blue ribbon in her dark hair.

Graham stood gazing at her in such speechless astonishment that she laughed almost as merrily as her son.

"What!" she said, coming forward with extended hands, "will you no longer speak to me, monsieur? Must I introduce myself as Madame d'Arblanc, and to Madame also," she added, turning to Ellen with so sweet a smile that, as the latter told her

husband afterwards, she fell in love with her on the spot.

“ Pardon, madame,” said Graham, recovering himself, “ you must confess this transformation is surprising—I am indeed glad to see you in a position suited to you.”

“ Ah, that was a dreadful time in Spain. I daresay, madame, your husband has told you of us, but I am sure he has not said how he was considerate to the poor prisoners. I travelled as my children’s nurse, and for weeks I did not know where my husband was, not even if he was alive. Ah, it was terrible !”

“ But may I ask who was the other Madame d’Arblanc ?” inquired Duncan.

“ She was my maid, a very faithful old servant, though, *enfin*, she was capable of

a *bêtise* or two," replied Concha, smiling. "I kept something of my own character, for my name is really Conception; Concha, is the—how do you call it?—a little name."

"The short for it, and a very pretty one, if I may say so, madame," replied Ellen.

"Thank you, madame. May I hope we shall see each other much while you stay. I must make you known to Adrien—to Monsieur d'Arblanc."

"He is here then?" inquired Graham, who had been wondering whether he was to meet one of his late foes.

"Ah, yes, he is here. He was wounded at Toulouse, so that he is a cripple; it was a great grief to me then, but what shall I say, when the wars began again I

thanked the good God. I go to call him."

"What a lovely woman!" exclaimed Ellen, when Concha had quitted them. "I wonder you did not quite lose your heart to her in Spain, Duncan."

"I told you I had admired her very much, but I would not change now, my wife, were she twice as beautiful," said Graham, earnestly, and Ellen's countenance answered him with eloquence ere their host entered.

He was a soldierly-looking man, with pleasant blue eyes and low voice, but he could not walk without a stick, and his face was worn and thin.

"I am glad to meet you, monsieur," he said, speaking, however, only in French. "I am charmed to be able to express my gratitude for your consideration towards my wife. She has told me so much of the

kindness of your compatriots that she lessened my regret when I found myself unable to reply to the call to arms."

"You are very good," replied Graham, somewhat bluntly, "but humanity could not have done less than we did, and I only wish it had been in our power to do more."

"You disclaim merit, monsieur, but that is the fashion of brave men——"

"And especially of your nation," added Concha.

"At least for what you did do, accept my thanks," said Monsieur d'Arblanc, and Graham shook his proffered hand warmly.

From this time a pleasant intimacy sprang up between the Grahams and d'Arblancs, which increased with their opportunities of meeting. Duncan tho-

roughly enjoyed the simple, social French life, differing as it did in almost every respect from the severely regulated existence to which he had, in a greater or less degree, been accustomed in England.

It was hard to say in what the difference consisted; the d'Arblancs were not unpunctual or irregular in their habits, but their characteristics were as unlike those of the Rector's friends, for example, as their delicate dishes and tastefully arranged table were opposed to the roast joints and plated dish-covers that invariably appeared at his dinner-parties. In the one house there was a formal interchange of civilities, and as much display as was feasible; in the other was ready hospitality, with good-humour and *esprit* as garnish and sauce.

The household included Monsieur d'Arblanc's mother, Madame Dufaure, now a widow for the second time. She had known more than the common share of sorrow, yet such was her unfailing cheerfulness that no stranger would have guessed that the lines in her face had been graven there more by grief than by age.

Her quaint grace of manner was as charming as her appearance, for though her dress was invariably black she wrapped her head and throat in soft lace that gave her a singular picturesqueness. Ellen was delighted with her, and in listening to her began to understand the difference between disjointed talk and conversation.

Her quiet comments fell like oil on the troubled waters on the only occasion when

her son shared a passing popular excitement.

Napoleon in his insolent triumph had caused sculptured groups to be placed on the Arc du Carrousel representing the Emperor of Austria kneeling humbly at his feet, and these groups the Germans began to remove. Instantly the fiery Parisians flamed into anger, which was as instantly cooled by a prompt display of German steel, and Monsieur d'Arblanc, who had seen some of the proceedings, came home indignant.

Graham fortunately was not present, but Ellen perceived his excitement and understood it.

His mother listened and replied calmly to his outburst.

"You must understand yourself, my

son, you are more Frenchman than Napoleonist, and it pains you to see German soldiers in arms in Paris."

"Of course it does, it sends the blood to one's head!"

"However, *mon ami*, if the case were reversed, I think your sword would unsheath itself quickly in Berlin."

"That may be, my mother, but we are in Paris, you see, not in Berlin."

"True, but we have the intelligence of our nation with which to see that these Germans have behaved well. They will not permit those insulting sculptures to remain, how could they—and, *en passant*, *mon fils*, you must allow they were ugly, and not to be regretted—but they put up wooden screens while removing them, so

that the eyes of the French people should not be annoyed. I say again, they do well."

"Ah, *petite mère*," said Adrien, laughing, "we all know you are the constant advocate of good sense. You do not yet know, Madame Graham, what a wise head my mother has."

"Shall I answer that as Julie, the *bonne*, answered me only yesterday?" asked Madame Dufaure.

"How, then?"

"I had explained to her with care which were the four great monarchies of Bible history, and I then asked her to repeat them to me. *Figurez-vous comme elle est stupide!* Elle m'a répondu, 'Sont-ce les trois hommes, madame, dans la four-

naise ardente?' 'Quelle tête,' lui dis-je. 'Madame,' repliqua t-elle, 'je n'en suis pas l'auteur!'

In the laughter that followed this story the Arc du Carrousel was forgotten, and in truth Madame Dufaure was right in saying that her son did not share the common enthusiasm for Napoleon. He had too much justness of mind to admire a selfish despot because he was a great soldier.

The two gentlemen soon discovered that though sufficiently patriotic they could each admit the good points of the other's nation, an amount of tolerance by no means common in such exciting times. Thanks to this quality, they could exchange ideas freely, and even enjoy jokes at each other's expense. Graham perhaps tried Monsieur d'Arblanc almost too much

when he quizzed the swaggering gait and enormous trousers of the French soldiers, but the Frenchman had the best of it when he slyly persuaded his new friends to accompany him and his wife to the Vaudeville.

There, in somewhat of a defiant spirit, "La Route de Paris" was being acted. If the promoters of the piece hoped to annoy their English visitors they were disappointed, for no one could better appreciate what was less a caricature of a reality than a representation of the French notion of their countrymen. When the gouty and splenetic old milord, with his pretty girl-wife, arrives at the Auberge des Trois Fleurs-de-Lis, and roars his anger in uncouth phrase because the smiling landlady knows not how to dress a *bifteak*,

when he sends for the butcher and directs him to cut a portion large enough for three French dinners, the scene was sufficiently ludicrous, and the shopkeepers amongst the audience laughed heartily at the sight of the invariable guinea with which he overpaid the astonished landlady, vowing she should have no more, because of her impudence in saying that "*les messieurs Français aimeront miladi*," the simpler meaning of that word being unknown to him.

Ellen was greatly amused at her countrywoman's strange garb, clumsy gait, and corkscrew ringlets; but gentle Concha thought she ought to apologise.

"You forgive us, madame, I hope; there are some of your compatriots who are indeed strange."

"They are almost as odd as miladi there," replied Ellen, "but you see the fashions of London and Paris are not alike, and we do not attend as much to dress as you do."

"It is true, but why do not you? A pretty woman increases her beauty, and a plain one makes herself attractive, by the art of dressing. You, you have *le goût* of a pretty woman, and with your *tournure* you could look to be wondered at, *à merveille*, I would say. I am not too bold, I hope, *chère madame*?"

"Far from it. I wish I knew, or that you would teach me, how to make a simple dress look as elegant as yours always do. English people think no dress fit for wearing in society unless it costs a great deal."

"Ah, that is not our way, but, *ma chère*,

what I can show you, I will with all my heart," replied Concha, who was really fond of her new friend, and longed to retouch what seemed to her inartistic in her dress.

It was pleasant to stroll in the warm evenings along the boulevards or Champs Elysées, and observe the ever varying crowd of promenaders peering in at the shops, smoking, hanging about the cafés, or listening to music, while the lamps twinkled and the summer moon rose over the watchful fort of Montmartre.

These walks, however, were not without their dangers, for foot pavements were hardly known, and pedestrians had to make the best of their way between the carriages and the gutter.

In one street, indeed, Napoleon had

arranged two gutters in lieu of the one channel that usually ran down the centre of the roadway; two pavements even he could not make, for an indignant Frenchman expressed the general feeling when he exclaimed, "Pour moi, j'aime la totalité de la rue!" Still this modification was a step in the right direction, and might almost have induced the allies to leave the street its original name of Rue de l'Empereur instead of changing it to Rue de la Paix. Change, however, was the order of the day, everywhere laurelled N's had disappeared, and sign-painters had a busy life of it, though, as a humorous barber remarked, "We are *bons gens*, we suit ourselves to the time; for me, I have left my sign blank. When the Government shall have declared itself,

I will ask permission to put myself under its patronage—*Qu'importe?* King, president, or emperor, a man must need a barber.”

The time now drew near for the Grahams to return to England, though Duncan was still on sick leave, his knee troubling him frequently, and remaining too stiff for him to be able to mount a horse.

Both he and his wife looked forward with regret to their impending departure, and Duncan openly declared that, if he could choose, he would prefer a life in Paris to any other. It was not so with Ellen; her stay had been a treat, a holiday thoroughly enjoyed, and to be recalled with pleasure, but her energetic nature could not be satisfied with so aimless an existence, were it to last for any length of time.

Concha and she grew more confidential as the time of separation approached, and one afternoon she ventured to inquire what picture was concealed so carefully behind the green silk curtain, which no one ever appeared to draw aside.

“Ah!” said Madame d’Arblanc, “there is a sad story. It is the portrait of my husband’s half-sister, who must have been as beautiful as she was unfortunate.”

“Did you not know her?”

“No; her father lived in Normandy, and I never met her. In fact, I only saw my mother-in-law once before Monsieur Dufaure’s death. That was an unhappy marriage, and after Adrien grew up he would have avoided his step-father entirely, had it not been for this poor girl, in whose behalf he vainly interfered more than once.

But here comes Monsieur Graham. My *belle mère* cannot bear to see the picture, so I will show it to you both now, while she is out, before I tell you poor Marie's history."

Concha then untied the ribbon which secured the curtain, so that not even a passing breeze should lift it, and drew it back with one hand.

An exclamation broke from both the spectators, but Duncan's betokened more than surprise.

"Madame, for heaven's sake tell me when that was painted. Where is—do you know where the young lady is now?"

"No; but you do, if I am not mistaken," said Concha, turning pale as she looked at Graham's agitated face. "Oh! my poor *belle mère*, has she not suffered enough?"

What fresh grief do you tell us of, monsieur?"

"I hardly know myself, madame. It seems impossible, and yet there could not be such another face."

"It is not one to be mistaken or forgotten. She has been lost to us for three years. Speak, I beg of you!"

"Madame," replied Duncan, speaking low, and dreading the pain he was about to inflict, "I have often wondered why Madame Dufaure's face seemed so familiar to me. I wonder the likeness never struck me before. Her daughter died gallantly, in defending a battery at Toulouse. I saw her fall, and helped to bury her, and till her death her sex was unsuspected."

"Ah! la malheureuse enfant!" cried Concha, the tears (dropping fast from her

dark eyes. "Adrien must break it to his mother. I—I have not the force to do it."

Monsieur d'Arblanc was summoned, and listened to Graham's account with mingled feelings of distress and admiration for the daring his sister had shown.

Her story was, in substance, as follows: Her father, a tyrannical and passionate man, had allowed her during her later childhood to associate constantly with some cousins who lived in the neighbourhood.

No sooner did he find that a strong attachment had been formed between her and the youngest son, then on the eve of entering the army, than he abruptly broke off all intimacy with the family, and betrothed his daughter to a wealthy but

most unamiable old gentleman, who had admired her when still in the school-room.

The marriage day was fixed, the cousin had joined his regiment, and Madame Dufaure, who was as much a slave as her daughter, counselled submission and courage, and hoped that her advice was well received. On the eve of the wedding Marie, in a passion of grief, bid her mother good night early, and begged that she might not be disturbed till as late as possible.

When Madame Dufaure went to rouse her on the following morning her room was empty, and though active search was made no trace could be obtained of the fugitive beyond a village about three miles away, where a wakeful peasant declared that he had heard horses' hoofs in the

night, and looking out had seen cloaked riders disappearing in the darkness, how many he could not say, more than one, but it might have been two or four—what did he know? it was not his affair—and besides, the night was cloudy.

Graham could not recollect the number of the poor girl's regiment, had scarcely observed it, in fact, but he described the place where she was buried as accurately as he could, and Monsieur d'Arblanc resolved to visit it, and have the grave opened. It seemed probable that she had found means to enter the same regiment as her young lover, who was himself killed at Salamanca, and probably the chain and cross Graham saw round her neck might lead to her identification. This indeed proved to be the case when Monsieur

d'Arblanc, accompanied by his mother, reached Toulouse some weeks later, and Madame Dufaure had the sad satisfaction of removing her daughter's bones to the family burying-ground in Normandy.

The discovery of Marie's fate—for the d'Arblancs hardly doubted her identity, while it drew them closer to the Grahams—hastened the departure of the latter from Paris, that they might not intrude on their friends' trouble.

They returned to London, and spent some time as guests with Mr. Barton, Duncan suffering at times still, and though now able for duty, often regretting the sunny atmosphere and pleasant company he had enjoyed in Paris.

Ellen did what she could to amuse him, and strove by every artifice in her power

to awake his interest in the people round their future home. She kept up a lengthy correspondence with Mrs. Graham and Miss Mary, and knew how to extract and season everything in their letters that was likely to bring a smile to her husband's lips. Her efforts were useless, and she knew it even while she made them—knew that out of kindness to her he would listen to all she said, but that in an hour he would neither remember nor care whether the Langholm steading was to be repaired or the Laighriggs planted up first, nor would Miss Mary's characteristic, if somewhat elaborate, epistles convey information more to his taste.

He loved company and excitement, and these level lives were comparatively unin-

teresting to him; he would have liked the country if he could have kept open house and surrounded himself with town friends, but the lack of variety in the remote north wearied and disgusted him. Only in his affection for his wife did he never change, but he appeared to have exhausted upon her the whole constancy of his nature.

Ellen saw with dismay that the cold of winter affected him as it had never done before, and after duty on a wet morning, when he was forced to remain some time in his damp clothes, he was laid up with a severe attack of rheumatic fever.

It became evident, soon after his recovery, that he was not fit for further service, on account of the increasing stiffness of his wounded knee, while his mental

depression kept his wife in a state of constant anxiety. When all his efforts to get through his work proved in vain, and he was forced to sell out, and abandon his cheery regimental life, his regret and disappointment were bitter in the extreme, and were only lessened by the consciousness of an unwonted desire for rest. He expressed a wish to live abroad, and the doctors agreed that in a warmer climate he might enjoy comparative health. They also interfered peremptorily when his parents begged him to come home, declaring that to travel north at that season would be to expose himself to imminent risk.

To Ellen fell the sad task of acquainting Invermoy with this decision, and to him she poured forth part, though by no

means the whole of her grief, at thus abandoning not only her home in London, but that Scottish home so greatly endeared to her by its happy associations.

The d'Arblancs, when they were informed of their friends' intention, readily undertook to find them rooms near themselves, and thither Duncan and his wife removed in the month of February, and established themselves, with such introduction of English comforts as seemed advisable, for a prolonged stay.

The warmth of Concha's greeting made the first few days less melancholy for Ellen than they might have been, and with her usual courage she set herself to invent occupations, studying French, keeping up her music, and teaching 'Tonio and his little brother English, so that she might

not have time to repine over the loss of her long-cherished dream of a happy country home.

This constant self-control and enforced denial of her wishes, though a somewhat painful discipline, did in fact give the sweetness that it needed to a character somewhat too forcible and pronounced in its energy. Obligated to find her happiness in novel and unexpected ways, Ellen learnt how much of that quality lurks in odd corners of our lives, needing only to be sought for, even as the nectar waits in the deep flower-cup for the quick probing of the working bee.

In her husband she found her greatest joy and her deepest pain. To love and to be beloved is enough for some women, but with her these conditions should only have

been stepping-stones to a nobler life for herself and him. She had been ambitious for him, and for herself through him, imagining him distinguished in his profession, and when the day for that should be over, hoping that he would take his place with more than common worthiness in his home.

Not only were none of these expectations to be fulfilled, but Duncan was content with their non-fulfilment, content to lead a merely pleasant life without troubling himself over-much, satisfied that he had done his best while in the service, and not greatly regretting that the high prizes of the profession had been out of his reach.

Would she have had him regret them? ought she not to have been content with

his contentment? Perhaps so, and yet—in silencing that half expressed doubt, Ellen Graham fought and won her hardest battles.

Madame Dufaure assisted her greatly, for her kind old eyes read much that was passing in her heart.

The good lady would come and sit with her, and to wile away an hour would tell her tales of the troublous revolutionary period of her youth, mingling them with lesser incidents of her later years in which her listener recognised the patience with which she had endured a life of constant trial.

Looking at the calm face and cheerful smile of her who had borne so much, Ellen could not but think more lightly of her own disappointments, so that her face

too began to wear something of the same sweet expression, and her husband uttered a deeper truth than he knew when he declared that she was becoming more beautiful as she grew older.

CHAPTER V.

JAMES DEWAR IN TROUBLE.

THE arrival of letters from France caused an excitement at Invermoy that we, with our postal luxuries, can hardly understand. Once Ellen contrived to send a parcel by an acquaintance bound for Scotland, and no sooner was it received than Invermoy drove off in a little basket-carriage he had lately begun to use to fetch Miss Mary.

The box being opened, its contents proved to be some prettily-embroidered sleeves and handkerchiefs for Miss Mary,

and for Mrs. Graham a lace head-dress, such as Madame Dufaure was in the habit of wearing.

“Gude guide us!” exclaimed Jean, who, as she grew older, was inclined to resume her Scottish idioms, “does the lassie think I could face folk with yon outlandish thing on my head!”

“Oh yes, Jean; you see, she tells you how to put it on. You’re to fasten the ends back, and——”

“Ye may wear it yourself, Mary, if ye like, but I can’t put foreign fal-lals of that sort on my grey hair; it’s getting grey fast now my laddie’s gone. Fasten the ends back, indeed! you’ll need to, or you’ll be lettin’ them drop into your meat at every meal!” quoth Jean, to whom the cunning of Madame Dufaure’s fastenings

and adjustments would have been impossible.

"But, my dear, it is such a pity not to wear a good thing like this. You might quite set the fashion with it; I'm sure Mrs. Buchanan hasn't the like of it, and she'll be coming for her visit soon."

"Well, well, fold it up and I'll try it when there's no one by, not even you, Mary, I'd need to wear it a bit in my room that I might not be shame-faced in it. It was kindly thought of Ellen, though; she's a good bairn."

So the head-dress was stowed away among the lavender in the deep drawer upstairs, and Miss Mary, as she walked home, wondered if she could not copy it for her own use, provided that she was entitled to wear it. It was a pity Ellen

had not said whether such attire was exclusively for matrons, "though, to be sure, I don't know what hinders me from wearing the same as they at my time of life," reflected Miss Mary, sagely.

As she came in sight of Kate Macrae's door, she saw that a larger group of loiterers than usual was collected round it, and she judged that something unusual must have happened, for as she crossed the end of the road, two or three fresh people joined the others. She paused a moment—should she go and inquire if any accident had occurred?—perhaps Mrs. Sharp's child that had fits was dead, or one of the slaters working at the gaol had had a fall. No, she would send Phemie over to ask, and go home now to her tea, for she was weary; the spring weather

was surely more than commonly heating this year.

The ordinary way of going to the Cottage was up the main street of the village, but there was a little back path leading through a neighbour's garden which Miss Mary had been invited to use, and which she found very convenient now that each spring was indeed more tiring than the last, though scarcely from any fault in its temperature.

She did not meet anyone here, and when she reached home, she found that Phemie had gone out.

“The heedless lassie ! I told her to wait till I came back, but I daresay she saw the people at Katie's, and ran over to ask the news,” thought Miss Mary, leaving the doors open behind her, and beginning

to take off her bonnet and shawl. Some one followed her into the sitting-room, and she turned and saw, not Phemie, but James Dewar, standing in the doorway with ashy face.

"James! Preserve us all, what has happened?" exclaimed she, dropping her shawl and gazing at him.

"It's true—the bank—Tod and Smart have failed—the money's gone!"

"Gone!—what, all my money, that I was saving for the boy! Oh, Allan, my bairn, my bairn!" cried Miss Mary, and for the first time in her life she sank into a chair half fainting.

"Water," she whispered, feebly, when Dewar hurried to her assistance, and, Phemie opportunely arriving, she was presently able to sit up, and desire her

astonished handmaiden to shut the door, and go away to the kitchen. That done, and having waited till the unwilling steps had retired, she signed to Dewar to come nearer.

“Tell me about it, James ; it’s a hard blow, but I don’t want to blame you—you suffer too.”

“Ay, Miss Mary, I haven’t a penny left in the world ; but I care little—I’m young and strong, and can work. There’s many a man rides in his coach when he’s old that went on his feet till he was past my age. It’s you I’m vexed for—you that trusted me ; and as for that double-faced scoundrel, Tod o’ the Candleriggs, I’ll be even wi’ him some day,” said James, his face crimsoning with sudden anger.

“Hush, hush ! What can you do ! Will

punishing him bring back the money? And I thought, if the Lord spared me long enough, there would be something laid by that my Allan needn't think scorn of, and that when I was gone he'd know how his old aunt remembered him every day of her life. Well, well, that's over now," wailed Miss Mary, with slow tears dropping down her cheeks.

Her companion stood by her unheeded for a minute or two, and at last broke the silence.

"And your money was for Master Allan then," he asked, gently.

"Whom else should it have been for? Invermoy's provided for, and what other kin have I?" replied Miss Mary, whose reserve was swept away by this sudden flood of trouble.

"I couldn't tell," answered Dewar, "I thought it was a provision for yourself, Miss——"

"For myself! Did you think I would save and hoard for my own pleasure? Save us, laddie, you've less sense than I thought you had!" answered Miss Mary, indignantly.

"Vera true, Miss Mary," was the humble reply. "I doubt I've been the fool Mr. Spait called me. I've no told you yet what has come about."

"No, well go on—though after all it doesn't matter, does it? I have no doubt you did your best, and talking won't mend the loss. I am tired to-day, another time will do."

No reproaches would have hurt Dewar

as sorely as this quiet faith that he had done his best, for in his heart he felt that he had been over-confident, never seeking advice, and therefore sure to buy his experience. Miss Mary's look of utter prostration too, unmanned him, and he was near breaking down, but he repressed the unwonted emotion, and continued, hurriedly,

“But ye maun hear, Miss Mary, for I've no a creature to speak to, and a' the folk are blamin' and misca'ing me, and they're partly right. I've been like the bairns that go starin' at the sweeties in the shop windows, and dinna see their feet till they've got a fa'. But as lang as you believe me, Miss Mary, I dinna care the worth o' a parritch spurtle for a' the vil-

lage clashes.* You trusted me, and I wouldna have you think——”

“I’ll think no harm of Janet Dewar’s son, James. You may have been mistaken, and it’s very likely you have been, but I’ll not believe you worse than that,” said Miss Mary, holding out her hand.

Dewar took it with something like reverence in his face and gesture, and a moment after lifted his head with a gleam of the old resoluteness.

“Miss Mary, even if a man were far off the straight way, you’d bring him back and gar him work ! You’ve little cause to trust me, but there’s work to be got, and gold to be made somewhere in the world, and I’ll no rest till I get a grip o’ them

* Clashes—Chatter.

and pay you back the siller you lent me."

"Ah, well, Dewar, I'll not deny I should be happy if you could, but you must look to your own prospects, and to others who are poorer than I. Will any of the weavers lose by this?"

"No many of them. I'm in hopes I'll get my orders placed elsewhere before long. Miss Mary, yon man Tod maun have a black conscience! It was he that aye persuaded me to leave all he paid me in yon bank, and he knew fine his brother wasna doin' well."

"He sought to help his kin, Dewar; who knows, maybe he was mistaken too," said kindly Miss Mary, and could she have seen the portly draper at that moment, with all his complacency gone and his eyes full of uncertainty and terror, she

would have felt that she was nearer the truth than the angry lad beside her.

He, when he left her, hardly knew whether he was most comforted by her gentleness or grieved at her suffering ; but he had at least a distinct resolution in his mind which was of necessity a solace, for to determine on action is the first step to overcoming pain.

His friends, on the whole, treated Dewar well. A little inevitable triumph there was, for no circle can be so completely self-denying as to refrain entirely from saying, "I told you so," when occasion offers ; but he braced himself to meet such remarks calmly, and thereby disarmed the speakers, for of what use is it to persist in telling a man that he has been a fool if he pleads guilty at once !

In a day or two the tide began to run in the opposite direction, and many were the offers of help he received, usually in the form of—

“Ye can just step in and tak your meat wi’ us the day, Jamie, we’ll no miss it, and meat’s meat to a man that has nae hoose o’ his ain.”

Lest it be supposed that the working folk of Invermoy had so far out-stripped their day as to need the modern collier’s favourite fare, rumpsteak and champagne, I would remark that meat in Scotland meant food of any sort.

Dewar had obviously earned the esteem of his employers, for Mr. Spait, whose harshness he had disliked in his prosperous days, now carefully avoided any allusion to his loss, and even treated him with

greater civility. Mr. McHaffie took an early opportunity of telling him that he regretted his troubles, and was anxious to help him during his temporary difficulties ; and here he handed him certain gold coins ; which Dewar received with grateful surprise.

“ I’m mair than thankful to you, sir, for I can make shift wi’ this to help twa or three of the weavers that were no paid for their work. It’s just till I can get them mair that I need it.”

“ Ay, that’s as it should be. I should like to hear about it, Dewar, perhaps something further might be done in the way of loan, you can mention it to me if you think it advisable ; and, Dewar, Mr. Spait approves,” added the attorney, as James was leaving the room, an announce-

ment that completed his astonishment.

Before the summer was over, he paid a visit to Balmawhustle, ready now to make confession and consult with the parent whose opinion he had hitherto slighted.

Robert Dewar was bent and stiffened in body since we saw him first, but his heart was as stout, his notion of uprightness as strict, as ever. Out under the great lime-tree he and his son sat once again, and the old man crossed his withered hands on his stick and leant upon them without speaking, while James recounted to him the whole history of the past years. He felt that he was committing a breach of confidence in speaking of Miss Mary, yet unless his father could be made to share his esteem for her he could not hope to make him comprehend the chief motive of

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his present resolution. He told the tale, therefore, without reserve, and was relieved to find his father entirely approved his proposed plan.

“Ay, ay, lad, when ye first took up wi’ Tod ye were unco fu’ o’ yer ain conceit, and thocht the gowd wad stick to yer fingers like parritch to a spune. Ye didna want counsel or blessin’ frae me, nor ye didna get them, for ‘He that will to Coupar maun to Fife,’ and it’s ill herdin’ raised nowt.* But noo ye ken the taste o’ trouble, an’ ye’re no sae dooms sure o’ yersel’. Weel, gang awa’ wi’ ye, and gin’ yer heart fails ye, mind what yer auld faither tell’t ye this day—ye maun mak’ up yon siller to Miss Mary Graham, or ye’ll no be an

* “Herdin’ raised nowt”—driving wild cattle.

honest man. The Lord's aboon us," added Dewar, reverently doffing his bonnet, "may He preserve her and prosper you!"

In another day James Dewar turned his back on the sunny glen where the larks were pouring out music and the flocks pasturing on the hills, and as he looked round at a bend of the road and saw his mother still weeping at the cottage door, and his father shading his eyes with his hand and watching him as he went, the scene burnt itself in on his memory as only such farewell glimpses can.

A long farewell indeed it was, for he had decided to emigrate. Wonderful tales had reached men's ears of the free life to be enjoyed and the wealth to be won in Australia by those who could labour and endure, and when a young man of about

his own age, a sturdy fellow to whom his father's loom was hateful, told him he intended to try his luck there, it seemed to Dewar that he could not do better than accompany him.

After obtaining his father's consent he had a long consultation with Mr. McHaffie, which resulted in that gentleman's offering him a small loan, so as to enable him to start with a moderate chance of success.

"I've no children to provide for, Dewar," said he, "and the cousin that will inherit my money can better spare this sum than you can, supposing even that you never repay it. I like to see a young man pushing his way, so I was pleased with you from the first, and now that I find you take your reverse with spirit and mean to pay your debts, I've no sort of doubt that

you'll do it sooner or later. Pay them first before you repay me, and don't hurry so as to inconvenience yourself—I'd rather you paid me easily in ten years than that you should scrape to pay me in five."

"I don't know how to thank you, sir, it's just no possible to do it. If I make anything at all, I'll send you the interest, even if I can't manage the capital."

"Well, if it comes easy to you, I'll not refuse the interest, and if these stories of the country turn out to be true, why, who knows but I may get you to buy a bit of land and work it for me? It would be a queer thing if I found myself owning property out yonder," said McHaffie, with a chuckle.

"I wish you may, sir; it wad be a grand thing for me if I could be the means of

getting you anything of the sort. You'll pay what salary's due to me to my father, sir, as I said."

"To be sure I will, and just tell him not to scruple to apply to me if he's in any difficulties; make your mind easy, I won't lose sight of him."

"Then I can arrange with Stewart to be off as soon as we can hear of a ship. I'll away up to Langholm and have a crack with Caird about the sheep. I was aye wi' the shepherds when I was a laddie, and maybe I'll find myself none the waur for that now."

"You may be sure of that, James. Knowledge is like one of our old papers lying by for years in a locked box, but sure to be wanted some day."

In taking his farewell, Dewar found

that he had more and kindlier friends than he had imagined, which not unfrequently happens, for we often talk of the selfishness of man when we might as justly speak of his brotherliness, there being in most people a spark of true charity that needs but the breath of misfortune to fan it into flame.

And perhaps separation excites it more easily than most things; we can forgive so much when the sinner who needs forgiveness is going away, thrusting himself and his sins out of our sight, and we say and do our best with unspeakable tenderness when we are parting with one whose life, could we have so ordered it, should have run alongside of our own. There was no one to grieve in such fashion for Dewar, yet Miss Mary was startled and

disturbed when she heard of his intended departure.

She had grown accustomed to his presence in the village, and liked his blithe confidence and terse phraseology. He was young and light-hearted, and, in spite of the difference of age and position, she felt that his visits did her good, brightening a tranquil afternoon for her now and again.

She hinted something of the kind, adding that she should request Mr. McHaffie to make a point of letting her share any news he might hear, "though there's little need to ask that either, James, for the whole village will be talking of you."

"If I might make so bold as to write once in a way to you yourself, Miss Mary," said Dewar, hesitatingly.

"Write by all means, though by-the-by

I should think there can be few opportunities of sending letters from that country. Bless me ! Between letters from Paris and letters from Australia I shall be quite well informed about foreign parts," replied she, and the cordial permission was received with as cordial thanks.

As for Kate Macrae, she not only invited Dewar to a quiet meal or two, but gave him a farewell supper, whereat Mrs. Murdoch and sundry other cronies assisted, who mostly regarded Dewar with the sort of interest they would have felt in seeing a man condemned to suffer hanging or some other unknown torture. That he would ever set foot in Scotland again they did not for a moment believe, and they enlivened the evening with tales of misfortunes that had befallen adven-

turous spirits like himself. He listened smilingly to their prophecies, and declared that if they would meet him there that day ten years he hoped to present each of them with some proof that travelling was not the terrible thing they thought. Mrs. Murdoch was not sure that such jesting about the future was right, and hoped his words might not be visited upon him, though what she meant by this it would have been hard to say ; it was a recognised phrase, and she felt it right to use it, but her good-humour soon got the better of her theology, and her farewell was a hearty one. Perhaps the consciousness that she was about to exhibit a goodly pair of hose that she had knitted for him helped her to cheerfulness. When she had, as it were, opened the business, it appeared

that each of the guests had brought some little contributions to the traveller's outfit, and Dewar found himself well provided with comforts for the voyage when he had least expected to be so.

"I doubt ye'll no find me here when ye win hame, laddie," said Kate, when the others had gone. "I'm gettin' an auld body noo, and I'll be settin oot on my ain journeyings some o' these days."

"'Deed ye maun bide till I come back, Kate, Invermoy wadna be the same place if you were no here to gi'e me a welcome, or maybe some halesome advice, as ye ha'e dune afore," said Dewar, smiling.

"Ay, I'm no for pittin honey in a' my words, as ye ken, Jamie Dewar, and I'se warrant ye ye're no a hantle the waur for a' my flytin'."

"I'm no denying it, and ye canna say but what I've been douce enough the while."

"Ou ay, ye're a gude bairn, but a bairn maun ha'e his paiks whiles, and a laddie like you maun be hadden down, or he'll be praying owre mickle o' the Paisley weaver's prayer—'Lord, gi'e us a gude conceit o' oursels!' Sharp words are like doctors' stuff, ill to tak', but unco gude for the stomach."

"But ye'll wish me weel noo, Kate, ye aye gi'e the bairn a sweetie, ye ken, to pit oot the taste o' the draught."

"And ye maun ha'e yer sweetie like the lave. Weel, 'war's sweet to them that never tried it,' as the sayin' is, and I doubt it's the same wi' emigration and sic like, but 'he that tholes owercomes,' and if ye

keep gangin' up the brae ye maun win to the tap in time. Ye're a wise-like callant for a' that's come and gane, and ye'll ride in your coach yet, or my name's no Kate Macrae!"

This was the kind of saying to keep a man's heart up, and when the final day came, and Dewar was about to take his seat on the coach, a good many of his friends had assembled at the door of the inn to see him start, and Mr. McHaffie himself called for a "*Deoch an dorus*," or stirrup-cup, in which to drink his health. "Auld Lang Syne!" cried a voice in the crowd—"we'll ha'e the sang afore they start," and in a moment hands were joined, and the hearty chorus, that every Scotchman knows so well, rose up cheerily.

The passengers on the coach joined in,

and the coachman climbed more leisurely than usual to his seat, and gathered his ribbons up slowly, that he might not cut short a favourite verse. Time was up at last, however, and the signal given. Dewar, and Stewart, who had joined him, sprang into their places, and as the team started, a hearty cheer bespoke the goodwill of their friends in Invermoy.

The Laird himself was among them, having driven down in the basket-carriage, which was now waiting for him, the brown pony held by Hughie Morrison, who was on his promotion in the stables, and was allowed to don a rough gray suit, and go out with Invermoy when required.

As the coach disappeared, the Laird took McHaffie's arm, and turned with him towards the office.

"A sharp lad is Dewar, Invermoy," said the attorney. "I've no doubt he'll be a successful sheep-farmer yet."

"Lucky fellow! On my honour, McHaffie, I'd give all I have to be in his place. Young, and with the world before him, and a pair of strong arms to depend on. No drains or steadings in Australia, eh?"

"Not yet, but they'll come to that in time, I daresay. By the time Spait's son is grown up, he may start a branch of the business there, perhaps. But if I were you, Invermoy, I wouldn't envy Jamie Dewar."

"So you think—so you think. Neither would I, perhaps, twenty years back, but things trouble me now. Those drains at the Haugh, for instance, and the planting

at the Laighriggs. Bain's not so active as he might be, and the work doesn't get on. Confound these old bones of mine, they're growing stiff just when I need them most, and, as I said before, I wish I were Dewar, with no one to heed but myself."

"Ob, things will mend, no doubt, when Mr. Duncan gets well, and comes home. I've Caird's new lease ready for you to see, and Cameron has paid up some of the arrears. Come in and rest awhile," replied McHaffie, who was sorry for his old friend, suspecting that the heir's continued absence was the real cause of his growing melancholy.

"Yes, I'll come in ; I'm glad to see that ne'er-do-weel Cameron has paid anything. He's a doited body, and as helpless as if he expected the crops to sow and reap

themselves, and bring him in the money. I believe I'm an old fool for keeping him on just for the sake of his forbears. Duncan always said he ought to go. Talking of Duncan, saw you ever the like of this?" continued the Laird, pulling a long flimsy paper from his pocket. "My daughter-in-law put it into a box of lace stuff she sent my wife. We thought it was her own bill of fare at first, and that she had gone clean out of her wits."

"But what on earth is it?" asked McHaffie, to whom French was an unknown tongue.

"Oh! it's the list of dishes they have in one day at a French eating-house, they call Very's. My wife calls it sinful extravagance, and mayhap she's right. Nine soups, twenty-five kickshaws of some sort

—Lord knows what they eat there—thirty-one ways of dressing fowl! Thirty-nine wines, besides coffee, liqueurs, and all these things that I can't translate. There's a lot of women in the place always opening oysters, and you can have your pick of all this for five or six shillings."

"Upon my word, Invermoy, it may be sinful, but it sounds uncommonly good. I think I'd compound with my conscience somehow, if I were there, and enjoy myself. After all, it's clear waste not to use the good things provided for us. You might set that against the extravagance, you know!"

"You're a wise man, McHaffie, you'd make a good dinner first, and consider the righteousness of it afterwards, eh? Between ourselves so would I, and leave the

duty of abstinence to the ladies," said Invermoy, laughing.

"Precisely, but that's not an opinion to be advanced in public, or our characters are gone. Do not scandalise the village with yon paper, Invermoy, else Mr. McAndrew will be preaching on the sin of gluttony," replied McHaffie, producing his papers, and Hughie and the brown pony were well-nigh tired of each other's company ere the door opened, and the Laird was ready to drive home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COUSINS.

OUR lives, if we look back on them carefully, divide themselves pretty much into periods, some of rest, when everything goes on as usual, with little disquietude and less change, some of trouble and uncertainty, when the instability of our foundations come home to us, when our mode of life of to-day must be changed to suit the exigencies of to-morrow, and when fresh and frequent gaps in our circle of friends warn us that we are becoming in our turn the elders of our time. Such

a period of change is, of course, a simple and natural process. We all know the average length of human life, and that contemporaries will most probably die as they were born, within a few years of each other; nevertheless, many people regard these years of inevitable transition as if they were something exceptional, and speak of them in a tone of warning.

“So many deaths in the family should make us all think seriously, my dear,” said an excellent old lady to me once, as though our individual lives were endangered or affected. It appeared to me that life itself was a sufficiently solemn thing to demand our serious thought, and that no greater proof of human folly could be found than this, that we propose considering how to live, not when life is at its fullest, but

when the prospect of ending it is suggested to us. Fools we are, undoubtedly, most of us, letting slip the golden minutes, and then regretting the lost hours ; living from hand to mouth, as it were, and when we see a hatchment over our next neighbour's door, crying out, woe is me, my turn may come next, and behold my life has been barren !

Verily in this we are not as wise as the beasts, for they know winter is coming, and change their coats .betimes, but we know our death-winter is coming, yet we do not prepare till the first whiteness is seen on our heads, if even then.

What has this to do with the Grahams ? some one will ask.

Patience, dear reader. Every composer, however humble, is allowed to begin in his

own way, even a waltz has its introductory chords, and if there be any harmony at all in this piece of mine, I may be allowed to prelude a little before beginning the closing movements. And first, an adagio, grave, but not too melancholy, for there is no need to sorrow overmuch for those whose labour is ended and their rest begun.

Five years have gone by since we visited Invermoy, and they have wrought more change among the personages of our tale than the previous decade.

In far Morayshire Elspeth Graham has passed away quietly, and happily, as one who is going to a beloved home.

At Balmawhustle too, Robert Dewar has laid aside his bonnet and plaid for the last time, and has gone to sleep in the

moss-grown kirkyard out on the hill, not without regrets that he has not lived to see his Jamie come home a great man.

For Jamie is doing right well out in Australia—there are some stirring chords in our prelude, indicating who knows what sweet duet or gay rondo to follow.

He began humbly enough, but, by honesty and industry combined, soon made his way, and Robert knew when he lay on his death-bed that he need have no uneasiness about the gudewife, for that Jamie would see that she was well provided for; indeed with the cottage rent paid and its plenishing hers to boot, she might spend her declining years in comfort.

In the village of Invermoy itself some signs of progress and increasing population were apparent; one or two dwelling-houses

of a better class had been built, and taken by respectable folk whose steady custom was greatly appreciated by the small shopkeepers.

A new grocer had made his appearance also, and tempted and surprised the inhabitants by the novelty and excellence of his goods. Unknown luxuries began to be seen on feast days, and a wonderful number of the new ideas that were floating about might be traced to conversations held over Mr. Bright's counter. Kate Macrae never showed more acumen than when she made up her mind to stifle all feeling of jealousy and cultivate the acquaintance of the stranger whose attractions rivalled her own. Thereby she not only secured a friend, but maintained her influence as a leader in the village.

At the Manse a new reign had begun. Mr. McAndrew, whose gentle ministry had lasted so long, was "called," as the Scottish phrase goes, to a larger church in Edinburgh, and as he had a family to provide for, he accepted the offer, though, as he said, "an uprooted tree will find it hard to bud as well in a fresh soil."

His successor was a man of a very different type, young, energetic in his speech, and holding opinions as narrow as rigid Calvinism could make them.

His parishioners admired his sermons, but regarded him with a certain awe, very unlike the affection which had made them each and all take counsel with Mr. McAndrew in every crisis of their lives. His most devoted adherent was old Elspeth

Morrison, who listened with fierce pleasure to his fervid denunciations.

One other well-known figure was missing from the village kirk and market. The Laird had been dead about a year, and Duncan Graham was now known in his turn as "Invermoy."

There was little parade of sorrow when Allan Graham's coffin was borne to the dark vault in the ruined cathedral. Neighbours and tenants crowded to pay the due respect custom demanded at the funeral. But having maintained a decent behaviour during the service, they were free to return to their avocations, and the two women who in a darkened room sat sobbing in wordless grief, were not inclined to make their loss a subject for common-

place condolence. Miss Mary least of the two cared to talk of it, but rather sat silent, going over in her mind the young companionship, the dreamful uncertainty, the disappointed expectation, the quiet friendship, which had combined to make her cousin one of the central figures of her life.

Jean was at times more voluble, now extolling her husband's goodness, and anon wondering if her son would ever be his equal, and whether he would come home and settle as he ought to do. But the truest homage was paid to Allan Graham as time went on, and rich and poor began to discover how greatly they missed him. They had not known how they depended on the honest sense and kindly nature that were hidden behind that un-

pretending manner and homely face till they needed something, and felt that the friend and adviser was no longer there. Then they began to say regretfully, "Ah, when old Invermoy was alive, things were better done," or "Hech, sirs! the Laird wad ha'e tell't us what to dae," and these latter speakers were apt to add, "Maister Duncan's a braw gentleman, but he'll no be the man his faither was."

And they were quite right—though polite society preferred the younger Graham. He had attainments of a sort beyond his father's; he could comport himself with ease in a crowded room, and take part fairly enough in the conversation of the French *salon*. He had met some of the celebrities of the day, and had read a tolerable amount of modern literature of

not too profound a sort. Society liked him; he was an ornamental, even a useful member of it—would shawl a lady or turn over her music as if the rendering of such attentions gave him pleasure.

It might even be said that old Invermoy could not have filled his son's—dress pumps—for such a fine fellow that is perhaps a more correct expression than shoes. Whether the pumps or the sturdy country shoes are the best wear is a matter of taste, and perhaps feet, for which members a man is not entirely responsible.

After his father's death, Duncan came over from France, but for so short a time that he left his wife with the d'Arblancs, to her great regret. He was surprised and annoyed to find that he was by no

means so well off as he had expected to be, and he intimated to Mr. McHaffie that there must have been mismanagement somewhere.

“Perhaps you will be able to put matters straight, Mr. Graham,” returned the latter, drily; “your father had bad health, as you know, during the last year of his life, but no doubt with your activity you may bring the estate into better condition.”

Now Duncan by no means relished this speech; he observed that the worthy writer did not address him by the usual Scotch title, and that altogether his tone was somewhat ironical. He answered, therefore, haughtily,

“Farming has not been part of my education, as you know, and I have no

intention of beginning to learn now. But no more money must be spent on improvements that don't pay. My father was fond of modern experiments, and they do not seem to have been successful. Bain must do his work thoroughly; Tom Eadie, or any other tenant who is in arrears, must pay up or quit; that appears to me a simple way of getting things right."

"Very simple indeed! It will press a little hardly on those who have been so long under Invermoy's—I mean your father's management. Would you wish extreme measures taken in the case of Eadie and one or two others?—if so, I think—I must consider it, of course, but I think perhaps it would be better if our connection with the estate were to cease," replied Mr. McHaffie.

This was an alarming threat, and one Duncan had not for a moment contemplated.

“Oh, of course I want the thing done gradually, and I shall be very sorry if I lose your valuable assistance, Mr. McHaffie. I have been quite counting that you and Mr. Spait would be my advisers in all these affairs, and I am sure I shall not find better ones.”

“If you are satisfied, of course I have no wish to break off so old a connection,” returned Mr. McHaffie, “provided always that we agree as to the way in which affairs should be managed. The truth is, Mr. Graham, your father had taught me to feel so great an interest in the place, and so deep a regard for him, that I scarcely speak, perhaps, as an ordinary business man.”

"And I beg that you will continue to speak as a friend," replied Duncan, who saw that he must modify his views, unless he meant to find fresh agents.

It transpired that Mr. McHaffie neither liked nor trusted Bain, but he had already ingratiated himself with his fresh master, agreeing with him in decrying the new drains, helping him with just the right amount of information, and ekeing out the scanty knowledge he showed so as to make the very most of it.

Therefore, when the writers suggested a change, the new Laird would not hear of it, saying that he saw no reason to mistrust Bain, and that he should remain for the present at least.

To his mother Duncan was generous, though Mr. McHaffie averred that the

generosity cost him little. She was spared the pain of leaving her old home, for her son begged her to remain at the House, and proposed that Miss Mary should come and live with her. Both ladies agreed gladly to this arrangement, and the Cottage was shut up, and Mr. McHaffie instructed to find a quiet tenant for it, if possible. It was only to be let for a year, Miss Mary said, for she could not believe but that Duncan would come home in time for good.

He refused to say anything as to his future plans, but declared that in the meantime his health would not allow of his remaining in Scotland. When his business was completed, he set out for Paris, and for a year all went on quietly enough. At the end of that time Messrs.

McHaffie and Spait urgently requested his presence, alleging that there were matters on which they did not wish to act without him, and that would be speedily settled if he would but come over.

It was summer-time, when Paris was hot and the country pleasant, so he and his wife obeyed the summons.

“What on earth is the good of all this?” said he, discontentedly to Ellen, while preparing to go out with Bain soon after his arrival. “I know nothing about planting trees, so why should I go to look at some acres of dead sticks? There’s nothing but ill-luck about the place, I think. The young larch at the Laighriggs is dead, I hear.”

“Are you sure it isn’t Bain’s fault?” asked his wife.

“Why should it be? He gains nothing by my loss, even if he were a rascal, which I don’t believe. What makes you suspect him?”

“I cannot tell—I never liked him. When we used to go out with your father, I have seen him watch you exactly as if he were wondering how far he could go with you.”

“I think that must have been fancy, Ellen; he has suited me very well hitherto,” replied her husband, and he departed to look with puzzled eyes at the withering plantations, content to lay the blame on the “cauld spring,” when he should have found the true cause in the badly-dug soil.

Bain thought he had done a good morning’s work with his deluded master, not suspecting the evidence that was waiting

in the writer's office to oust him from his comfortable post. A friend—Mr. McHaffie would not give his name—had told him that there was a miscropped field on Eadie's farm, and another on a farm adjoining. Mr. McHaffie went quietly to work, ascertained the fact, and proved that the griever had visited both farms, and been seen in the fields in question. That he had not reported the culprits was fault enough, but the writer had his further suspicions, and waited for their confirmation. There was a bank in the village now, and the door was opposite his office—Bain was seen to go in, and one of Mr. McHaffie's clerks found it necessary to change a note at the same time, and thus became aware that certain sums were paid

in to his private account. Market day never passed without Tom Eadie visiting the public-house, where, being a weak vessel, he was usually loquacious. He was to leave his farm in the autumn, and his daily lamentations were mingled, after he had had his glass, with complaints that, whereas he was a most unfortunate man, there were some folk that could keep well with the world, though they were not as honest as they were thought. "*In vino veritas*," and there were not wanting some to say at whom the accusation pointed.

Mr. McHaffie got a hint of what had passed, and paid Eadie an unexpected visit, which brought about a confession.

He had secured Bain's silence with about half the fine he would otherwise

have had to pay. The money was borrowed, and this he felt an additional hardship —Bain, however, had been inexorable, “and I can tell you, sir, he maun ha’e made a gude job o’t, for there is Sandy McLure has done the same thing; but he can afford the siller gey an’ weel,” groaned Eadie.

Duncan Graham was put in possession of these facts by Mr. McHaffie, not without a certain quiet satisfaction, betraying itself in his eyes and voice as he stated them, for the grievance had been an object of dislike to him for years.

There was nothing, of course, to be said in his defence, and the only question was whether he should be prosecuted as well as dismissed. The Laird, now as incensed as he had formerly been lenient, was

anxious for the severest measures, but Mr. McHaffie counselled moderation.

“ You will gain nothing by prosecuting, for you know the saying, ‘it’s ill taking the breeks aff a hielandman,’ and he will be punished, for he will find it difficult to get work when he can give no references here. I desired him to be here at four o’clock; will you state the business to him, or shall I?”

“ Oh! do it yourself, by all means—I should only swear at him.”

Utterly unprepared for the mine which had sprung, as it were, beneath his feet, Bain could not attempt reply or excuse, but subsided into white-faced silence. At first, indeed, he refused to refund the money he had received from the two farmers, but at a hint that a prosecution

for fraud was possible, he yielded at once, and then and there handed the deposit receipts over to the writer.

“And now,” said Graham, speaking for the first time, “you leave Invermoy at once; I’ll give you a couple of days to pack up, but you do not give another order in my name. You will bring your books to Mr. McHaffie here. Now go!”

“That’s unco short notice, Invermoy,” replied Bain; “it’s no the custom. I’m thinking the wark’ll no get on without a griever—if I stayed till ye get ane——”

“The work has not got on so well in your hands that we need keep you,” remarked Mr. McHaffie, but Graham interrupted him.

“And if it had, I would rather it went to ruin than that a scoundrel should act

for me. You had best keep out of my way for the next two days," he exclaimed, and Bain departed, feeling that if his master had learnt to measure him so justly the game was up.

"I wish to heavens my cousin Allan were at home," said Graham, when he was left alone with the attorney. "He's just the fellow would have taken charge of the estate, and been happy in the doing of it, and I'd give anything to have the money without the land."

"Would you? Well, it's really a curious thing to observe how men who haven't got land want it, and they who have it cry out at it as a burden. There's Jamie Dewar, for instance, he thinks a bit of land of his own a grand possession, yet your father envied him when he had

hardly a penny to bless himself with."

"Did he really, now? I daresay, Mr. McHaffie, you think me a very careless fellow, but just try to see the matter from my point of view. I used to think when I was a boy that it would be a great thing to be the Laird; well, now I am the Laird—and what good does it do me? I'm a poor man; the estate swallows money by the pound, you may say, and I neither understand nor can help it."

"It's a hard case as you put it," replied Mr. McHaffie, who, as he observed his companion's dress and general appearance, could not but confess to himself that this polished gentleman did not look as if he were fit for the rougher duties of his station. The greatest dandies may be and often are the best soldiers, but they are

hardly likely to do work in which there are no visible laurels to be won.

"You do not intend to settle here for good?" continued Mr. McHaffie.

"I can't do it, my good sir," returned Duncan, impatiently. "The east wind cuts me in two; ever since that confounded rheumatic fever, I have felt a cold day quite intolerable. And, besides, we have our *ménage* now in Paris; my wife has her society, and the climate suits me, so it would be folly to break it all up and make a fresh start here. You see how completely I must trust to you, and I promise I won't go against you, as I did about Bain a year ago. Here's Mr. Spait, I must repeat that to him," said Duncan, and the junior partner listened to his assurances with his usual rigid politeness.

“That man Spait annoys me,” said the Laird, when recounting the afternoon’s proceedings that night at the dinner-table. “He’s as stiff as one of his own gate-posts, and not much more sociable.”

“He’s a good man of business, Duncan ; your father found him so, and I suppose you’ll allow he must have known,” said Jean, who was invariably provoked into unwise speech by her son’s critical remarks.

“I’m not doubting it, mother, but I don’t think my father or anyone can have found him a pleasant one.”

“Pleasant ! Everything’s pleasant or unpleasant with you now. That’s your foreign way, I expect. In our day folk thought little enough of pleasantness if a man could do honest work. Nobody

spoke ill of Spait then, I can tell you," exclaimed Jean.

"Perhaps not, mother. The French say that among the blind the one-eyed is king. If no one cared about politeness Mr. Spait no doubt passed muster. Have some fruit?"

"No, I thank you. I have been brought up to think fruit at night unwholesome, and I have no appetite for your new-fangled hours any more than I have for your French manners!" replied Mrs. Graham.

Ellen, presiding at the head of the table, for her mother-in-law had at once surrendered that place to her, listened to conversations such as these with growing discomfort. The mother had set her whole affection on her son, but had forgotten, or

refused to believe, that he could never be the kind of man she had expected. The perpetual contrast between the idol of her fancy and the reality galled her beyond expression, and her vexation showed itself in a thousand trifling ways. Duncan would lean back in his chair between the courses at dinner, and talk airy nothings to his wife. His mother sat upright and motionless, and, if he addressed her, would apologise for her inability to follow that sort of chatter. Sometimes he would put some scent on his handkerchief, and, directly she perceived it, she would remark, with a sniff of contempt, that in her day she had always understood that scents were for sickly young women. As for her husband, he was like Jacob, he'd come in bringing with him the scent of a fresh field.

Her son shrugged his shoulders, which was a fresh annoyance, and regretted that he preferred the scent of *violettes* to the smell of damp clay. He always replied with a smile of the most imperturbable good-humour, and poor Jean, unable either to influence or anger him, would retire to her room in dudgeon that even Miss Mary could hardly soothe. She, good lady, got on as well as ever with her young cousins. She was not so wedded to old ways that she could not be interested in new ones. Nothing pleased her better than to sit at her needlework in the drawing-room and hear Duncan read a new book aloud, or listen, with occasional interjections, to his descriptions of French life and his wife's warm praise of Concha's beauty and 'Tonio's sprightliness. If there was any

implied detraction from the merits of the Invermoy neighbourhood, she did not concern herself about the matter, being content with her own contentment, and not troubled with that itching desire to criticise, which makes near relatives think fault-finding both their duty and their dear privilege.

The autumn was cold and wet, and with the first days of settled mist, Duncan's equanimity vanished. The gloom outside impressed itself on his spirits, and he began to complain that such a climate was certain to bring back his rheumatism.

"Don't stand shivering at the window, dear, we will light the fire, and you can come and read to us," said Ellen.

"A fire! did you say?" exclaimed her mother-in-law in a high tone, that

made Duncan glance at her impatiently.

"Yes," replied Ellen, "don't you think it would be pleasant?"

"Oh, pleasant! I daresay it would be pleasant, but there's never been a fire lighted here before November. Who ever heard of a fire at this time of year!"

"I did not know that," replied Ellen, gently; "but I think Duncan feels the cold, and really needs one."

"Ay, that comes of French ways too, I suppose. He didn't need a fire when I had the care of him, and he knows well enough that his own countryfolk light the fires just a bit before the November term. I don't know whether you'll find the kindling ready when no one thinks of needing it, but you can ring and ask about it."

"I suppose they kindle the kitchen fire before November, mother," said Duncan. "There must be sticks in the house. Good heavens! fancy having warmth regulated by law in that way; why, I'd light a fire in June if I wanted it!"

"I don't doubt you would, you've no sort of respect for the ways of your forbears since you were abroad. It's just a heart-break to see you sometimes," said poor Jean, to whom every trivial custom that she had studied with such pains when she came, an untaught bride, to her home, had become sacred and unalterable. "There's Pringle, poor man, doesn't know what you would be at," she added, as the grey-haired butler closed the door after a moment's surprised pause on hearing the order.

Duncan came forward suddenly, as if he had made up his mind to something.

“I am sorry our ways disturb you, mother, and indeed we do not seem to suit each other. I think we had better return to France. It must come to that some day, and why not now?”

The three ladies looked up, but only Miss Mary spoke.

“Dear, dear! It will be a terrible thing for us all when you go. Why, I could almost find it in my heart to——” she stopped, but Duncan finished the sentence merrily.

“To come yourself, you were going to say. Bravo, Cousin Mary! So you shall, and we will make you do all sorts of novel things.”

“You shall put on a French bonnet and learn to drink chocolate,” said Ellen.

“You shall go to Very’s, and eat frogs,” said Duncan, silyly.

“Indeed, then I will not,” replied Miss Mary, energetically—“I am willing to learn some things, my dears, but to eat food of that description—No! Ah, I was an old goose to speak of such a thing; I should never be able to go. I have never been in a boat, except to cross the ferry at Burntisland, and a very disagreeable feeling I thought it. I should die of fear on the sea!”

“Not a bit of it, you have far too stout a heart of your own. Say you will come.”

Miss Mary laid her work on her knee and thought, her kind eyes full of seriousness as she gazed out at the driving rain. The bare contemplation of such a possi-

bility made her feel younger for a minute, but presently doubt prevailed.

“My dears, it could never be done; and supposing I did go, I don’t want to live and die among strangers, and how would I get home again?”

“Oh, we should find some one to take care of you,” replied Duncan.

“Some one!—and do you think a quiet stay-at-home body like me would be willing to come all that distance with folk that were well-nigh strangers? Oh, my dear bairns, you’re just dreaming,” said Miss Mary, smiling. “No, no, ‘east or west, hame is best,’ and I must be content to see Paris through your eyes. I am not made for wandering on the earth.”

“Well! that’s the first wise-like word

that has crossed your lips this half-hour, Mary! If my son cannot stop in his father's home, and learn his father's ways, I must thole it as best I can ; but, my certie! Mary, when a woman of your years and sense begins to speak of trapesing about the country in that fashion, I think we're all going clean demented!" said Jean, indignantly.

There was almost an argument that night between Ellen and her husband as to their future, the wife making one final effort to keep him in Scotland, and he parrying her entreaties with replies so plausible that they appeared to be reasons, though she felt that they were but excuses. It was useless to combat what was evidently a fixed determination, and Ellen yielded the point at last with a sigh, and

wished she could forget it as easily as Duncan, who kissed her and began to talk at once of other things.

In such a position, Elspeth Graham would not only have yielded, but would have ceased to wish for the forbidden fruit, and the kiss that closed the discussion would have been to her so sweet that there would have been no room in her mind for disappointment. Ellen was incapable of such complete self-abnegation, being a woman of active spirit, to whom kisses, though sufficiently pleasing incidents, were hardly to be classed among the rewards of life.

Her husband and she returned to Paris a few weeks later, and on their arrival she set about arranging her house more satisfactorily than she had yet done, to

Duncan's secret delight, for he saw in this change that she had accepted her lot.

Like most women who have no children to occupy them, but whose sympathies are too keen to be spent on dumb pets, she interested herself further in the poor, and aided by Madame Dufaure soon found more than enough occupation, spending many an hour in the bare *greniers*, by sick pallets, or in feeding hungry-eyed children, while her husband and Monsieur d'Arblanc smoked in the gardens, or played a quiet game of cards at a *café*.

The ladies at Invermoy returned to their usual routine when the young couple left them. Their relations to each other changed as years rolled on, for while old age only increased Miss Mary's kindliness, and mellowed her opinions, so that she became

more and more serene and sympathetic, Jean, who was yet but middle-aged, grew harder of visage and of heart.

Wifehood, motherhood, widowhood, had made her older by a full decade than her years, and out of her experience she talked to her gentle cousin as from a height, and had no suspicion that Miss Mary's views were far more catholic than her own.

In sooth, after the old Laird's death, she lost all her pliability, and went rigidly through her life, missing her guide, and not able to suit herself to her new circumstances.

Some little pleasure she did feel in the improved condition of the estate, or rather of the Home Farm, and indeed her happiest moments were spent in the old "byre,"

with the fragrant breath of the cows about her, and the rich milk foaming into the pails as she passed.

Mr. McHaffie was wise in his generation. He soon saw that Mrs. Graham, senior, as she was now called, was not well disposed towards Bain's successor, not because she could excuse Bain, but because he had been her husband's servant, and she was accustomed to him, and disliked anything new.

As it was, she might write foolish things to the young laird, and therefore she was to be conciliated, and the writer bethought him of a plan.

"Gillanders," said he to the new grieve, "the dairy has been badly managed. Look out for a new cow, and see and get things right there. Mrs. Graham thinks a good

deal of it, and knows about it—you understand.”

Gillanders did understand, and when he brought a beautiful Ayrshire cow to the front of the house, and sent in to ask if Mrs. Graham would come and see if she approved, Jean began to think that he might be a better man than Bain. Little matters of which she had complained in vain began to right themselves, fresh poultry appeared, and the butter had not been so good for many a day. Decidedly Gillanders was an acquisition, and Jean's frame of mind and body became more healthy when she summoned energy to interest herself in matters that had been the pride of her youth.

“If there were just a bairn to look to,” said she, one day, “I'd be better pleased.” She

had been telling Miss Mary how well they were ploughing the low fields, and how there was talk of a ploughing match that the Invermoy man was sure to win.

“It’s a terrible pity that Ellen has no family,” she continued. “It’s a strange way for a place to go, that’s passed from father to son for generations. My Allan was an only son, and there’s Duncan lives away, he might as well not have it, and if he has no heir your nephew will get it, and a pretty landlord he’ll be, after spending the best half of his life in India. It’s as though a curse had come by Allan’s marrying me,” said Jean, dissolving into tears, as was too often her custom now.

“Eh, my dear, how can you misjudge Providence in that fashion?” said Miss Mary’s comforting voice from the depths

of her arm-chair. "You made a happy home for Allan, and he'd have been a lonely man without you. Do not vex yourself over the ways that are past finding out."

"I daresay you're right, but for all that I'd be better contented if I could hear that Ellen had a son," persisted Jean, but Miss Mary did not answer her. She was thinking of a house with broad green blinds and deep verandah—she knew the description by heart,—and was trying to picture to herself what manner of face was bending over a desk in the dim room, or perhaps at that very moment writing to "dear Aunt Mary." She did not consider that in Calcutta only the most active spirits could at that moment be out of bed, but one of these was Allan Graham.

A very handsome fellow he looked, as he

stood at his door with his bridle in his hand, giving an order ere he took his morning gallop. Attitude and voice alike indicated a habit of authority, but the eyes and mouth were those of a kind, though resolute master. If his cheeks were bleached perforce by heat and confinement in darkened houses, there was plenty of strength in his square figure, and certain light spears in the corner of his room, as well as sundry short sharp "tushes" in a box on the table, testified that he was entitled to join in the gallant chorus—

"Here's a health to all who fear no fall,
And the next grey boar we see!"

Nor were other spoils wanting—the tiger skin on that cane sofa was come by hardly enough, and as Allan canters by an enclosure where the grass-cutters are

laying fresh branches and piles of thick dough-cakes before the chained elephants, one Mahout looks after him with respect, for he remembers how that huge tusker played him false and swerved, how the man-eater sprang on his shoulder to his—Mohammed's—infinite terror, and how coolly Graham Sahib leant out of the *howdah* and fired, and the dreaded tiger dropped with a bullet in his brain.

These were not the days of express rifles either, and a hunter of big game risked more in earning his laurels than is necessary now.

Few English ladies had as yet come to India, and those who came were not very favourable specimens; but now some more adventurous spirits began to bring their wives out, and queens indeed these ladies

were from the moment the vessels dropped anchor between the sandy banks of the broad Hooghly.

Fêted and flattered, with easy credit, comfortable houses, and obsequious servants, many of them adopted at once the indolent habits and self-satisfied tone that were characteristic of the Anglo-Indian before increased communication with Europe made him less local in his views. Here and there a lady with more energy or finer nature than the rest, stood out against the evil influences of the place, and such a one verily reaped her reward.

Complimentary platitudes were abandoned for earnest admiration in her presence, and men who carefully concealed every vestige of intelligence in certain other drawing-rooms, talked in hers as though

anxious to be seen at their very best.

In such society Allan was a favourite, for the companionship of any gentle lady recalled that of his mother, and softened his manner into chivalrous courtesy. His boyish churlishness had disappeared, and with it the rebellious sense of injury that had often prevented him from responding to his mother's affection. He saw now that much of the separation between them had been due to his own reserve, and the regretful longing with which he looked back to his boyhood helped to keep alive that freshness of heart so rarely seen in a man, and so instantaneously recognised and appreciated by every high-minded woman. And Fanny Jutson? She was forgotten as utterly as such a creature can be forgotten. During the

first days of the voyage, when the ship was tossing heavily in the Bay, and Allan was undergoing concomitant miseries in his berth, his thoughts, when he had energy to think at all, reverted to her persistently ; but on finding his sea-legs, other matters began to interest him.

At three-and-twenty, with a bright sea, a fair wind, and a good ship running gaily before it, with the white sails spread, and a pleasant, briny, tarry scent in the air, a man must be extraordinarily in love if he does not walk the deck cheerily, and forget for a while all about the lady ; and if the love be a loyal one, and the lady be true-hearted, she will not think a whit the worse of him for being frankly a man among men, rather than a lackadaisical dreamer, rhyming, perhaps, lyrics to her

apron-strings. But when the case is other than this, when the love has been a mad boyish passion such as Allan's, and the woman is a schemer like Fanny Jutsom, there can be no better or more wholesome medicine for the diseased heart than such a voyage as his in the *Jason*. The novelty of it roused him, perforce, and the keen breezes blew away his fancies, so that by the time he had come through a gale that nearly sent them to the bottom, he had begun to wonder how he could have been so great a fool during the last year.

Every man on board had to take his share of work on that wild night, and Allan, after labouring for dear life at the pumps, learnt two or three notable things about himself.

When the danger was over, he remem-

bered, first, that life had seemed a very precious possession ; secondly, that not a thought of Fanny had occurred to him as adding to its value ; and lastly, that whereas, on leaving home, he had read her parting letter over at least once a day, it was now more than a fortnight since he had even looked at it.

The Cape was in sight when he made these discoveries, and ere Calcutta was reached, he regarded the whole episode as a healthy man regards the delirium of some bygone fever. He did not even take the trouble to destroy her letter, but from sheer indifference left it in the drawer of his desk.

Allan then, cantering along on his Arab to take his "little breakfast" in the cool of the morning at a friend's house, is in

some ways very unlike the infatuated lad who dawdled away the hours in Somers Street.

Now he dismounts, and pats Emir's glossy neck before he is led off by the *sais* to the shade, where other horses are already standing, their attendants whisking long white yak-tails about them, lest the flies should trouble them overmuch.

The garden is gorgeous with creepers and flowering shrubs, and the breakfast is laid under a bower of blossom. Ladies and gentlemen, some in riding attire, some in cool white, are grouped near it, and the barefooted servants glide round them noiselessly and quickly. Allan is quite at home here; the hostess is the wife of the Governor-general's private secretary, and the guests are of all ranks—a judge or

two, some young civilians sent out to make their fortunes under the wing of a relative in the great company, and officers fresh from subduing the sturdy Ghoorkas, and hoping to proceed soon on another campaign.

For the Pindaris must be met before long and taught to respect English boundaries; and the chief talk at the breakfast-table is of their last incursion, their strength, courage, and the dispositions necessary for attacking them. Wild raiders they are, well described in lines put into the mouth of one of their number by a modern singer—

“Ah! I rode a Deccanee charger with a saddle-cloth
gold-laced,
And a Persian sword and a twelve-foot spear and a
pistol at my waist.

.

From the Deccan to the Himalyas, five hundred of
one clan,
We asked no leave from king or chief as we swept
o'er Hindostan.

.
"Tis many a year gone by now, and yet I often dream
Of a long dark march to the Jumna, and splashing
across the stream ;
The waning moon on the water, and the spears in
the dim starlight."

Yes, a little war becomes a wonderfully
interesting topic when it is at one's doors ;
and though Allan was not likely to leave
Calcutta, some of the party had friends
who did not know from night to night
whether they would see those lances gleam
from behind the dark mango-trees, or the
whirling dust on the horizon which gave
warning of the enemy's approach.

Not that lighter topics were wanting ;
there were theatricals to arrange, and balls
to discuss. Here a slim-waisted dame

promised dances to a favoured cavalier, and there Mrs. Bounce, whose proportions and indolence alike forbade her to waltz, enjoyed the amusement she affected most—a good gossip. She knew that terrible results had ensued from some of her remarks, and she rejoiced in her power.

Had she not once split the whole society of Pagulabad into two sections, by pointing out that Mrs. Jones had been sent in to supper with General Black, although General Brown's commission was the older by two months! Of course Mrs. Jones resented this insult, and was sure that it was intended—*intended*, do you understand?—and having stirred Jones himself up to inquire into the matter, the inhabitants of the whole district instantly took sides, and war was proclaimed.

It is easy to see that when social proprieties are at stake, no other topic of conversation has a chance ; and confident in the importance of her opinion, Mrs. Bounce would preserve a dignified but observant silence until some of her trusted allies formed a circle round her, and she could open her latest budget of news.

Before the guests dispersed, a tall native approached, and with a deep salaam announced that a man-eater had carried off a boy, on the previous evening, from a cluster of huts some miles from the city. His brother had just brought the news, and he pointed to a lank and scantily clad Hindoo who was crouching at a little distance.

Then followed questions and orders, and

the miserable messenger, who had started at daybreak, lay down to rest with the happy conviction that the Sahibs would wreak vengeance for him on the dreaded tiger, and that perhaps he might secure a hair of the whiskers or a claw as a charm.

It was a manly, self-reliant life altogether that Allan led, full of wide interests, and if the fortune he expected did not grow quite as rapidly as it might have done had he had fewer scruples as to the way of amassing it, still he was securing a little competency, which must increase in time.

His character was better understood than at first, and though no doubt some of the natives with whom he had dealings despised him as a fool, blind to his own interests, there were others who ap-

preciated the honesty that after long trial had not once been doubted.

He himself never forgot his initiation into the ordinary methods of growing rich.

Soon after he landed, he had to investigate some accounts between his employers and a native merchant who had incurred their suspicion. Koda Buksh beat about the bush for some time, and let fall various hints which conveyed no meaning to Allan's simple mind. Too sharp himself to understand simplicity, Koda at last ventured to say that the Sahib was expecting too much, but named a sum beyond which he would not go, and which he hoped might help to settle the account.

It would have been hard to say which was the most bewildered, the native when he found himself forcibly ejected from

the office, or the young Scotchman when he imagined himself the victim of an unheard of insult.

In his indignation he requested a private interview with the senior clerk, himself a relation of one of the directors, and to him with burning face and hasty speech he told his tale.

The old man looked at him curiously over his spectacles.

“You are a singularly honest young gentleman. I hope you may remain so after you have been a year in this cursed country. Koda Buksh was doing nothing unusual, but I will see him myself about it. Next time you encounter him, treat him as if nothing had happened.”

“But do you mean to say that——”

“I mean to say that a good many things

are known and understood, but not talked about. Of course a man can take his own line about them if he chooses. I once knew a lad who began with the same views as you, but he changed his mind before long. He took to brandy-pawnee though, and that finished him. I sometimes wonder whether it was a kind of shame that drove him to drink; he used to swear India had been the ruin of him, and so it was—so it was. Look here, Mr. Graham, I've always regretted that I did not do more to help that poor fellow; so I say to you, stick to your present notions. You'll be a better man if you do."

"Thank you, sir, I mean to do so," said Allan, shortly, for he felt that he stood upon dangerous ground, and that he could not say much against a custom to which,

for aught he knew, the very man he was addressing might have succumbed.

For the same reason he did not express himself too strongly on a subsequent occasion to his servants, when they stated that a bag of rupees he found on the table beside his morning tea, had been left for his own use. He merely desired that the person who had left it should be summoned to receive it again, and forbade them to allow anything of the sort to occur in future on pain of dismissal. At first this order was received with incredulity, but as time went on it was remarked that Allan's servants were exceptionally good, even in those days of native devotion. Perhaps their master's honesty had something to do with it. He had been about three years in Calcutta when the news of his mother's

death reached him ; and after his Cousin Allan also died, he felt that his aunt's house was the only home left to him, and that her life too might well be closed ere he should revisit his native country. For people did not hurry to and fro as yet between India and home.

Certain vessels, with marvellous and dangerous steam-machines inside them, had begun to ply, puffing out their steam slowly and heedfully, and earning much abuse for damage done by them through increased washing of water against river banks—certain of these vessels, I say, had begun to ply round British shores, and very soon two of them would cross the Atlantic, bold pioneers of what huge and endless fleets ! As yet, however, no one had proposed that they should attempt such

lengthy trips, and busy men could not afford to spend months in slow sailing vessels, nor indeed had they learnt to wish for half the leave of absence that every official claims now, grumbling loudly that it is not longer still. Grown men do not cry for the moon, and for the same reason, when the "P. and O." was undreamt of, they did not sigh daily for English comforts, nor propose to cure their sicknesses by a voyage home.

Sometimes indeed when the days were hot and steaming, when the lush grass grew up in a night, and the snakes slid in and out among the moist leaves, when the air was full of mosquitoes, and the thunderclouds gathered heavily on the horizon, Allan would lean back with a gasp in his chair, and think hungrily of the cold win-

ter winds and frosty sunshine of Invermoy. Anon he would recall, too, the gold-green shade of the beeches in summer, he would hear in fancy the pleasant tinkle of the Moy among the grey stones, and thinking of these things and of one special afternoon that he spent among them, he would repeat to himself his boyish vow, and turn to his work with fresh heart.

What does the heat matter? A man must live quietly while it lasts, but that is not for ever, and the cool season is coming with its sport and pleasures. Sting away, mosquitoes—no, confound it! patience is all very well, but if that punkah-coolie goes to sleep again, he must be dismissed. “*Kaincho!* you son of an owl—” there, that is better, and as we were saying, the cool season must come in time, and another,

and another, and during all of them we are laying by, even doing a little trade on our own account, and some day, some fair day in the far-off future, we shall go home and keep that youthful resolution, and then—why then, when there's a bit of land to look after and a house—not of course a great place like this bungalow, but a cosy cottage like Aunt Mary's, for example,—why, then there will have to be a mistress to keep it in order, a sweet, simple-minded girl, who shall of course love and obey *us* implicitly. By-the-by, what are Cousin Duncan and his handsome wife about, they have not written for an age? That was a pretty girl, that sister Agnes, who trembled so in church when she had to take off the bride's glove; handsome Ellen was far more composed than she. Very

likely she is married too by this time; she ought to make a good wife.—“Yes, Mr. Jones, I will be with you in a moment. I had no idea it was so late!”

Mr. Jones is surprised, and hopes Mr. Graham is not suffering from the heat, it is so unusual for him to be a moment behind his time; but then even the most punctual of men may be overtaken by a day-dream once in a way, and there is no cleverer thief of time than this delicious, pernicious, irresistible occupation of day-dreaming.

One evening, after indulging in fancies of this sort, Allan bethought him of that letter of Fanny Jutson's, lying still in the secret drawer of his old brass-bound desk. He had intended to destroy it months and months ago, but on trying the drawer he

found the wood had swelled, and it could not be opened, and not having any tool at hand to force it, he had let it remain undisturbed. He opened it now, however, and took out the letter, the paper on which it was written already yellowing in that moist atmosphere. Reading it with fresh eyes and soberer mind, he saw quite new meanings in it, meanings that brought an angry expression into his face as he read.

What a farrago of ejaculations and superlatives it was ; in what sort of mood could such an epistle have been written ! Yet stay, what was this ?—" You have restored my self-respect, and made me great in my own esteem." Had Fanny really cared for him more than he suspected, or was this also a mere phrase ?

After all, she was a marvellously beautiful woman, and showed a good deal of discretion in very difficult circumstances; perhaps he had been thinking too harshly of her, for she was not to blame for his folly. Still this question about marrying her was a strange one, and somewhat curiously worded.

“I wonder what on earth I said in my reply,” thought Allan; “I have no recollection whatever—some nonsense, I daresay. Marry her, indeed! Bless my soul, how could I ever have thought of such a thing! No, no, my wife is not to be one who has appeared on a public stage. I should like to know what I wrote; my letter was a good companion to this one, no doubt. Hallo! suppose Fanny has kept it! I never thought of

that before. Well, we're not likely to meet again; but I hope she has never shown it to anyone. Poor soul! I daresay she had a hard time of it, for Jutsom was a brute. Somehow I don't care to burn this, but I'll take care no one reads it."

Allan put the letter into a wrapper, wrote on it—"To be burnt unopened in case of my death," and replaced it in the secret drawer.

It was mail-day, and among the business letters laid ready for him in the office, he found one in his aunt's frail, delicate handwriting. It was a longer one than usual, and the first page was running over with pleased thanks for certain presents that she had received through the kindness of a London friend of Allan's, who undertook to despatch to their several des-

tinations sundry packages he sent home.

"The shawl is beautiful," wrote Aunt Mary, "and the cushions, for which Janet our maid is gone out to buy the very best feathers, will make the room quite brilliant. They are indeed more suited to this large apartment than to my little cottage. I am not likely to take them there, I fear, for Duncan is quite absorbed in his Paris life, and I continue therefore to live with his mother here. She is greatly pleased at your recollection of her, and has arranged your pretty china in the tall cabinet between the windows ; you will remember the carved chessmen on the lowest shelf that you used to play with when you were a very good boy. When are you coming home, my dear ? You have been a weary while away, and I would like to see you

again before I grow much older. Besides, though you may think it ill becomes me to write of such matters, I would have you remember that your interest in this place is greater than it was. Ellen has no children, and it may be that you or yours will be in possession of it some day; therefore you should keep alive your knowledge of the people. Bethink you of this, dear nephew, and come home to us, even if it is but for a short time."

Very excellent and pleasant advice this of Aunt Mary's, and well worth thinking about. To be sure, Duncan's life is probably a better one than that of a man who is being dried up in the tropics, and is, moreover, exposed to continual risks, fever, epidemics, and so forth.

"But what an unlooked for thing it

would be if Invermoy were to belong to a son of mine," thinks Allan to himself. "Fancy those very beeches coming into the possession of a descendant of the merchant whose trade was so jeered at. I suspect if they do, a little of his money will not come amiss. These are castles in the air, however, not to be indulged in, though in writing to Aunt Mary it may be as well to talk of returning in a couple of years. That might be managed, perhaps. By-the-by, there is no letter from Ellen, but as she is in France, no doubt her parcel did not reach her so soon."

That acknowledgment also arrived before long, but Ellen had nothing of great interest to communicate. She wrote far less cheerfully than Miss Mary, and described her husband as living in constant

society, while her own time was spent chiefly among the poor. A curious state of things, reflected Allan, and not one that would be to my taste. Ah, here's a post-script—

“I hope, my dear cousin, you will not think me careless of your beautiful gifts when I tell you I have given one away. I could not wear the three bracelets, and my sister has just come over here to stay with us, and possesses very few ornaments, so I gave her one on her birthday. You will not be angry, I trust.”

Had Ellen seen the sly smile on Allan's face as he read this, she would probably have guessed that she had exactly fulfilled the unspoken wish in his heart when he chose and packed the three gold bangles.





